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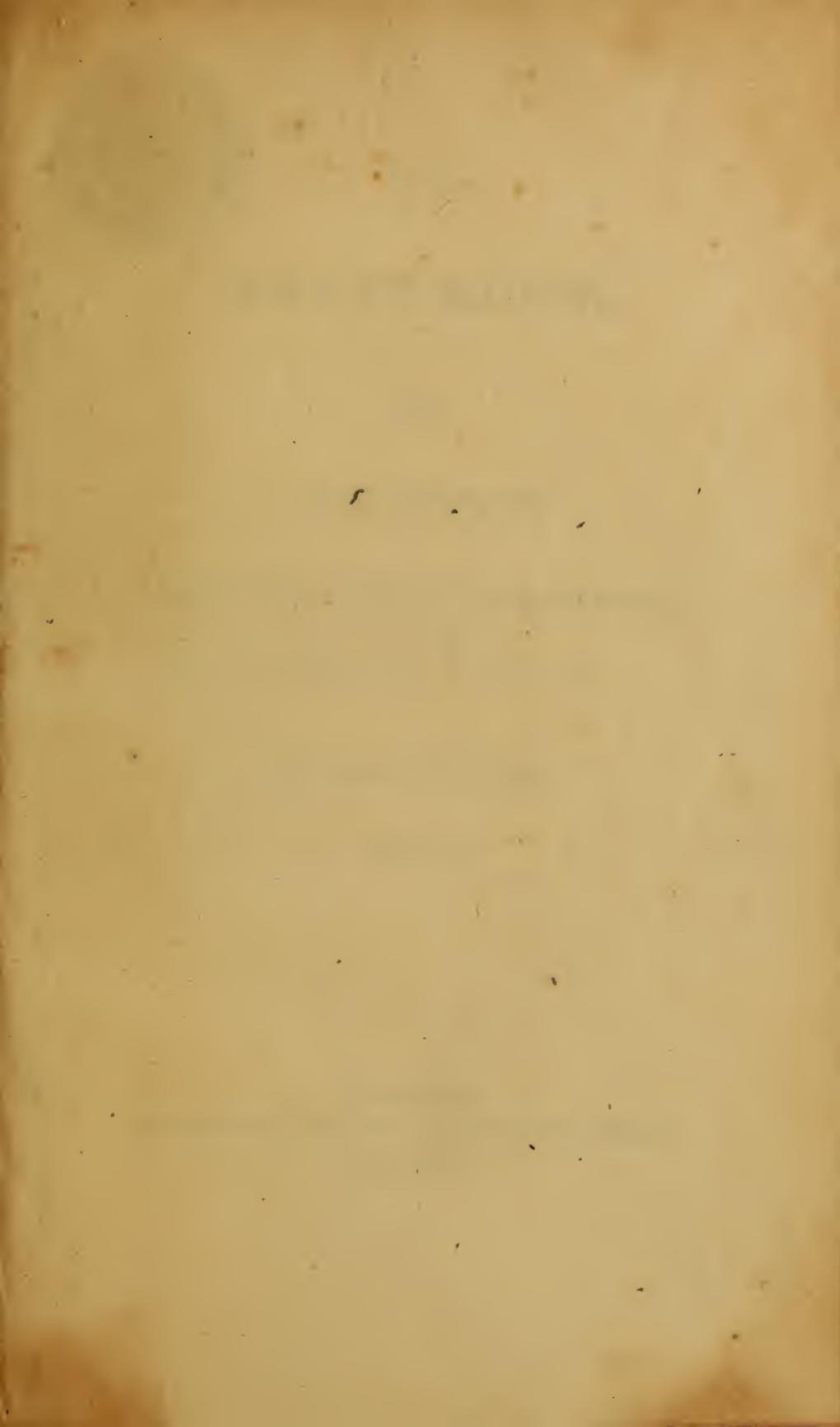
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THE

SECTARIAN;

OR,

THE CHURCH

AND THE MEETING-HOUSE.

By Andrew Picken

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON:

HENRY COLBURN, NEW BURLINGTON STREET.

MDCCCXXIX.

LONDON:
PRINTED BY THOMAS DAVISON, WHITEFRIARS.

THE SECTARIAN.

CHAPTER XII.

CONFIDENTIAL MATTERS EXPOSED ; SHOWING
THE DANGER OF INCURRING THE DISPLEASURE
OF CERTAIN DEVOUT MEN.

ON the day following the meeting, the company at Orton Hall were parted by different employments and engagements. Louis Stavely had been about Lynch Castle or closeted with sir Hugh the greater part of the morning ; and it was observed that he met the party at the Hall, at dinner without his usual good spirits and animation, and could not conceal a disposition to thoughtfulness and abstraction for the whole evening.

On the morning after this, while at breakfast, the conversation of the party turned upon the late meeting in the village; and Mr. Orton was in a humour to be facetious upon the defeat of the fanatics, as he called them, and the successful opposition which their scheme had met with from his friends present; “But what,” said he, “could have infatuated that man Hanby to manage so wretchedly as to thrust a deaf man into the chair, I cannot conceive,—as if he meant purposely to add to the ridicule of the whole proceeding.”

“I cannot agree with you, sir,” said Mr. Jarman, “either in your opinion of the folly of placing the person alluded to in the chair, or in the defeat being so complete as you seem to suppose it. These people are not at all defeated by the opposition which sensible and respectable persons condescend to offer to them, far less by their turning their backs and treating them with contempt, as we did. I think it quite likely that they will set up their proposed library still, and

that they will make it a matter of *éclat* too; from the very circumstance of our opposition, which will only give them a handle to call themselves persecuted men. Yes, and they will meet among themselves too when they have mustered a few pounds of subscription money, and in their despicable cant offer thanks for their success in the good cause, and perhaps, like greater mischief-makers, sing a *Te Deum* for their victory over their enemies."

"How can you account for such conduct?" inquired Mr. Orton, simply.

"Merely by the natural disposition to self-deception, which follows in the mind of those who, having once lowered the character of the Deity to their own conceptions, have succeeded in persuading themselves, that in the exercise of their senseless zeal they are doing him service."

"I think there is little difficulty in accounting for that part of their conduct," said Mr. Stavely;

but I confess I cannot see how a deaf chairman should answer their purpose."

" Not certainly on account of his deafness," replied Mr. Jarman, " but because he is a weak old woman, and a ready tool to abet by his name, &c., the schemes of such as Messrs. Hanby and Allmouth ; and above all, because the poor man has a sort of title attached to his name, which, to the low-minded people who are votaries of this sort of thing, is an important matter of boast ; and because '*Sir Hugh Salvage, Knight, in the Chair,*' would look better in the newspapers, although the man might be deaf and crazy too, than any simple *Mister* of the first talents in the country."

" You don't mean to say, Mr. Jarman, that they will have this ridiculous affair shown up in the newspapers ?" said Mr. Orton.

" Not *shown up*, in your sense, sir ; but if it is not in the newspapers, and shown in their own

way, so as to appear to their own sort as they wish it to appear, Mr. Hanby has less management than I give him credit for."

While they were thus talking, a servant entered with the provincial newspaper, and the doubts of the unbelievers were soon dispelled, when Mr. Orton, who eagerly caught the paper, had run his eye down its columns. The meeting was indeed there reported, in laudatory and pious language, as numerous and highly respectable, sir Hugh Salvage, of Lynch Castle, knight, in the chair. There also appeared the speeches of Mr. Hanby and the rev. Mr. Allmouth, made out in very decent style; and, according to the account, the resolution for establishing a religious library in the village was unanimously adopted; and with the exception of a slight interruption from certain sons of Belial, who are sometimes permitted to trouble the saints, and who made, on this occasion, a vain and abortive attempt to disturb the excellent individuals engaged in the

good work, the utmost harmony and piety prevailed, and it was evident that a revival of true religion was rapidly in progress.

"Such impudence is really astonishing!" exclaimed several at once.

"It is not at all astonishing, it is so common, if you only observe it," said Mr. Jarman. "But come, gentlemen, and let us to the fields, if you have breakfasted. You shan't draw me into another religious discussion. I am bored to death with it. The very air of this part of the country, (a country which looked so happy and peaceful when I first saw it) seems to carry controversy on it like a pestilence into every house. The Lord keep us all in our senses!"

"Can you have the heart to speak evil of so lovely a country?" said George Orton, standing up at the window which looked toward the village.

"It is a glorious retreat, I confess," said Mr. Jarman, "if there was only that quiet in the

breasts of men, that is spread by the Creator over his works. I must be out to the fields,—*allons, messieurs.*”

The morning was delightful, and the whole of the gentlemen went out to enjoy it, excepting Stavely, who did not seem at all happy, and who tried to avoid even Lydia Orton’s anxious and inquiring eyes, as they seemed involuntarily to watch his countenance; and he heard with pain her resolution not to join the gentlemen, evidently because he himself had refused to do so. He passed the day partly in his room writing, and afterwards at Lynch Castle, to which he rode alone, and returned in the evening, with his face clouded with care, which he in vain tried to conceal, and his manner appearing, to Lydia’s anxious fancy, quite altered and inexplicable.

On the day following, the old gentleman and his sons had projected an excursion to a watering place, distant about thirty miles, where they proposed to dine, if the ladies could be persuaded

to accompany them, and to return the same night. As they were preparing to set out, the post brought letters for Mr. Stavely; but he would not be prevailed on to join the party in their excursion, excusing himself on the plea of particular business at Lynch Castle, and also of having letters to write in reply to those he had just received, upon the subject of which Lydia, who watched his looks, imagined he suffered considerable anxiety.

There was something most unexpected and damping to Lydia's feelings in all this, and she began to dread some undefined misfortune or disappointment. But from feelings of delicacy, and to avoid remark, she did not refuse to accompany her cousin Helen and the gentlemen in the excursion, though she foresaw it would be any thing but an enjoyment to her. The party departed without Mr. Stavely, generally in high spirits, enjoyed their excursion much, and returned somewhat late. Yet even the old gentle-

man could not repress an occasional twinge of care, as he thought of his intended son-in-law, and his silence, since his arrival, on the subject of the marriage, for which there seemed not the most distant preparation. The strange circumstance of sir Hugh still remaining at the Castle, and the cause of Stavely's frequent visits, caused much anxious conjecture ; while Lydia, to whom her lover's presence had now become necessary to her enjoying any thing, was absent and abstracted during the day : her thoughts brooding constantly over the imagined contents of the letters and other circumstances, until her sensitive mind was wrought up to a state of the most impatient and nervous anxiety, which still, as she tried to reason herself out of it, seemed to increase in intensity, until, by the time she arrived at home, and returned for the night, she was almost in a state of fever.

The morning after, when the usual agreeable muster took place in the breakfast parlour, Louis

Stavely did not make his appearance. Mr. Orton observed the anxious looks of his daughter, and, making inquiry, found that Mr. Stavely had taken an early breakfast in the library, and gone out to ride an hour before ; and it further appeared that he had, on some of the previous days, been engaged with a strange person, who turned out to be Mr. Strip, the new attorney of Oldwood.

A strange feeling of alarm came over the mind of the old gentleman, as he thought of these circumstances, although they might actually amount to nothing. There seemed something unlike himself in the conduct and bearing of Stavely within the last few days ; that he, who erewhile had always been the foremost in every plan of enjoyment, and open and candid to a fault, should become suddenly secluded and mysterious—at a time, too, when the happiness of so many depended on him—was most unaccountable. The good old man ransacked his recollection for any circumstance at home or in the neighbourhood

which might help his conjectures, but could think of nothing, excepting that on his meeting his neighbour Mr. Hallam the other day, who, it seemed odd, he found riding in close friendship with sir Hugh Salvage (a man whom the same Mr. Hallam had always previously spoken of with dislike); the two saluted him, and passed on in a very distant and most unusual manner; and the former, whom he had always known as a free-speaking and somewhat roistering seaman, looked on that occasion as prim and severe as a covenanter.

In order, however, to throw some light upon various matters now going forward, which were beyond the penetration of any one at the Hall, it will be necessary that we conduct the reader (perhaps with little good will) into the little study, or bureau, of Mr. Hanby, the great religious character of Mount Carmel, where the following conversation took place between him and his hopeful protégé and confidant, Mr. Strip, the attorney.

The excellent man himself sat behind a table covered with papers and parchments, business accounts, and Reports of religious societies. He seemed in a high state of excitement about something, and thumping the table before him, as was his manner, thus authoritatively commanded the cunning yet quailing pettifogger, who, with his hat laid at his feet, and a litter of papers awkwardly on his lap, sat at a dread distance, like one before the inquisition :

“ Come, come, Strip! I will have none of your aws and ayes! Tell me at once, and distinctly, both every word that he said, and his manner of saying it, that I may know it all as clearly as if I had been present myself. If this young man will still have the imprudence to oppose me, and to treat me with disrespect, I will eat into every corner and interest of his, like a canker! I will raise the very dead against him but I will be avenged!”

“ Hush, hush, sir! You know it would ill

become me to allude to—but you know the christian profession should always—”

“ Certainly, Strip, certainly. Don’t think to teach me my duty as a Christian. Are Christians not to be avenged of their enemies, and the enemies of him whom they serve? Strip, you surely are not well read in theology. But this is no time to instruct you in religion. Tell me exactly how, and in what manner. Mr. Stavely refused to treat with me for the broom-field.”

“ Why, sir, first he heard me very patiently, while I told him of your wish to make an offer for it, and while I endeavoured to sound him what he would take. I showed him, sir, at much length, that it formed but a sort of codicil of his property, and expressed (as if from myself) my surprise that a gentleman of your wealth should think of buying it, as it was evidently of no value *as land*, and could never be thought of for building upon, as it was entirely out from the village. In short, I said every thing I could, to make

little of it, as was natural that I should do on your part. In fact, I said that he ought to be most thankful to get rid of the aforesaid corner-cut, for any thing the colour of money. I added, that ready money was of such value in these times; and as for the cash, I said, he could have it down on the nail; and, in short, I said——”

“ You said—you said—you eternal lawyer’s repeater! you everlasting *brief!* Am I to sit here all the morning listening to what *you said?* What did *Mr. Stavely* say, sir? I wonder he did not throw you out of the window for what *you said.* He has more patience, I confess, than I have, however badly I think of him. I say, sir, what did *he* say to all this?”

“ Why, sir, if you were not so fast, you would have had it before this. In truth, sir, he heard me, as aforesaid, with the greatest patience and politeness, which might have been a pattern to——”

“ G—d d——n your lawyer’s goose-gabble!

You would make a saint swear, sir! (Heaven forgive me!) You will make me commit sin, Mr. Strip, if I listen to you any longer, and you do not think fit to come to the point."

"I should be sorry to make you commit the least *sin*; but you know, sir, men are but men," said the attorney slyly, and enjoying the scene.

"You use too much freedom, sir! Go on, sir!"

"Mr. Stavely having listened attentively until I had finished, merely said, that I might inform Mr. Hanby, or whoever it was that sent me, that he was not disposed to sell the field in question, nor any other part of the Lynch property. I then said, that the conveyance could be made, if he *would* sell, in the most satisfactory manner, and he should have the cash down in Bank of England paper, for that you had plenty of money."

"And what did he reply then?"

"He simply smiled, and said he did not want the money."

“ Smiled, did he? At your round-about palaver, I dare say—not at me, I am sure?”

“ I can’t say, sir.”

“ You *can* say, sir, if it was a smile concerning me, and if it was a smile of contempt, and —”

“ Indeed, Mr. Hanby, you are very particular; but to say the truth, if any one has to complain of contempt, it is myself; for after saying all I could, he rang the bell, and, without showing me any such civility as could distinctly be understood, he waved his hand to the footman, to show me out, with all the dignity of a peer of the realm, or my lord chancellor himself.”

“ But he did not show *me* any disrespect, Mr. Strip? That is what I want to come at—did he?”

“ I cannot formally say that he showed any precise disrespect, sir, either to me or you—you or me, sir, I mean; but certainly, if I must be candid, he paid *me* nothing like respect, nor did he in the least appear to honour me for the sake

of the honourable profession to which I belong; for although I made a bow at the room door, as I retired, as low as any dancing-master; I somehow crept out of the big house as if I had been a mere nobody. Faith, I felt afraid of the very servant at my back, and dared not look behind me."

" Ha, ha, ha! Your adventures, and your description of them, make me laugh—ha, ha, ha! You are certainly very backward in any thing but your mere profession, Mr. Strip. But you may thank me for every thing else. You never would have seen any thing of high life, if I had not brought you into my own house; and yet I almost despair of making you a gentleman."

" Don't say so, Mr. Hanby. I am sure, at all the auxiliary and other religious meetings I behaved myself in a most comely manner, and great attention and honour was paid to me."

" Humph!"

" But what makes you so very anxious about

this piece of land? Do you mean to feu it for building, or what? I fear it would turn out a bad spec."

"I thought I had given you a hint, Mr. Strip?"

"No, indeed, sir."

"Then, in order that you may devise how I may get it into my hands, be it known to thee, Strip, that Mr. Ringrod, whom I had surveying Mount Carmel, assured me that there is an excellent lead mine under that barren turf that forms the surface of it; that it is well known to the knowing ones to be *mine-land*; and if old Stavely had known any thing of prudence he would have made a good thing of it. Now this passionate proud youth is quite ignorant of its value; but I *will* have it out of him in some shape, if it were only for his cursed opposition to me yesterday, (Heaven forgive me!) But I have already got a mode of harassing him. I'll teach beardless youths, whom nobody knows, to oppose and offer ridicule to men of *established* character;

men who are at the bottom of all the noble and religious benefits that are done in our nation ; men who are known far and near for their exertions in the good cause ! Strip—if you had the least brains you would contrive a way, by the *law*, whereby I might annoy this proud young fellow. But I have begun pretty well. Curse him ! (Heaven forgive me !) Did you remark, Strip, how he stood up, and told me to my face, with the greatest scorn, that this meeting had not assembled to second my views ? The broom-field ! I shall work him out of the whole estate yet, if there be law in the land."

" I have always considered you as greatly my superior in any thing that requires great and talented schemes, as I justly ought, and I hope you will grant me no ordinary efficiency in the——"

" Why, Strip, you are a tolerably undeviating harier of the law, if you once get the scent ; but really you have neither nose

nor eyes of your own, and art but a blind puppy after all, though a harier by instinct. Do you know I have before this time, as I will venture to affirm, got this same Louis Stavely into a state of as thorough chagrin and vexation as a high-headed and hot-hearted young man can well be? And before I have done with him, I will make him repent, the longest day he has to live, for setting himself up to offer opposition to men of influence and grace of the present day, who are occupied in the religious improvement of the people, and the spread of the gospel. Knowest thou, that he has come to this neighbourhood to marry the old squire's daughter, of the Hall, as soon as he gets possession of Lynch Castle? And the sanguine lover comes down here, and thinks he has no more to do but step into the Castle, and live happy all his days with the wife of his youth, be the foremost man of the county, because of the extent of his property, and what he calls the antiquity of his family, and oppose and thwart

me in all my measures for the good of religion, of which he appears to be destitute? But what did I do? I got round that bothered old dotard, whom the young man's late uncle, like an old fool, intrusted with possession of the Castle; and I have so worked upon him, and blown into his deafest ear against the young man, that he refuses to give up possession; at least, delays it—ay, and *will* delay it, please God: and so keeps the hot-headed youth out of both his estate and his wife; keeps the lofty and loving dame from her husband; deprives the old squire of his fêtes and his feastings, and his irreligious rejoicings; and frets and fumes the young squire, and baffles the whole—ha, ha, ha, ha, ha! I'll make the best of them glad to sue to me yet, ha, ha, ha!"

"And what will you make by all this, Mr. Hanby, unless you get the broom-field for a peace-offering? Gad! you're a clever man, sir. I could never have thought of such things."

" I tell you, Strip, you have no head, no more than a ninepin. What a mess they 'll be in at the Hall shortly ! I tell *you* all this, Mr. Strip, in order that you may add your knowledge of the law to my general suggestions. I may want your assistance, you know, ha, ha, ha ! They may set their love past to cool, ha, ha, ha ! Oppose me ! before a whole company, and my character not yet established in the neighbourhood ! They are powerful, these Ortons, in this place ; and had they had any religion in them, any sort of knowledge of the world, any outward decency at all, they might have been made something of ; they and I might have understood each other ; we should have held up each other's hands, and we might even have put down that puffed-out Allmouth. But they must oppose me ! the only man in the neighbourhood that knows any thing of religion, and what it is good for. Curse them ! Heaven forgive my hasty words ! Strip, thou

knowest more of my mind than any man : but take care. I don't deny that I have infirmities : the best of men have their infirmities, Strip."

" I have not seen you take on so for a long time, sir ; but, to be sure, to be opposed in a religious plan — ”

" No more for the present, Strip ; beat thy brains for some legal plan under which I can take possession of the field with the mine in it. And hark ye, Mr. Strip, remember what I told thee of that man, Groom ; an impudent fellow, with whom I have taken more pains than many have done for the favour of a premier—to set himself up among his betters, and take the part, against me, of an old milk-and-water clergyman, who speaks evil of me, I am convinced, wherever he goes, and knows no more of evangelical religion than Plato ! I say, Strip, something must be done to sew up the mouth of that man, the shopkeeper, I mean. Hark ye ! is not his son

fond of a shot?—There are poachers abroad, Strip—dost understand me?"

" You're a clever man, Mr. Hanby."

" Ha, ha, ha, ha!" laughed the director, his good humour quite restored by the contemplation of his own execrable plans, and the flattery of his dependent. " Now go and finish the papers," he added, " and mind what I've given you to understand, Strip. I can't always be talking as plain language as an act of parliament, to those who have any brains in their heads. Good morning, Mr. Strip."

The director rose when he had uttered this polite speech, and showed the pettifogger out, who, as he turned the corner from the back entrance of the great man's house, and passed the large growling watch-dog, which, to the man of law, seemed to show forth the zealous dignity and pursy insolence of its master, he began to walk more erect, finding himself quite enhanced in his

own opinion by comparison, from the insight he had just obtained into his patron's character. To be sure, the poor limb of the law had of late years strongly suspected himself for a tolerable rogue, although, to say truth, he never put the very worst construction upon what he did himself; and said, in soliloquy, that really he could not see how a man could make honest bread, or recommend himself, in these times, without as much neighbourly rougery as would bear him through. But beginning now, as he further conversed with Mr. Hanby, to discover the grand distinction between rougery on a great scale and in a mean and small way, its infinite guilt when done with little art and in little matters, and its merit and dignity when executed with bold hypocrisy on a grand scale; he began to think that there were much worse men in the world than himself, even among "excellent men;" and that, in short, he might be much more of a rogue than he had as yet ventured to be, and after all be better than

some people : a judicious inference, which arises legitimately out of the example set by many devout men, when their characters come to be understood, and which contributes of course to the purity of morals, and strict congruity of speech and behaviour, which we know every where prevails.

The evident anxiety and abstraction of Louis Stavely threw a damp, as we said, upon the whole party at the Hall. Those who were not immediately concerned expected a marriage, and a pompous ceremony and fête, and all the other interesting circumstances that might take place at the union of a pair who necessarily drew so much attention to themselves and their fortunes. Even the servants at the Hall and of the neighbouring gentry joined with the whole train of vacant gossips of the village and neighbourhood in talking of, and wondering, and longing impatiently, as they perceived no signs of preparation for “lady Lydia’s” intended marriage ; for by

this title Miss Orton had become known round Oldwood, from her gentle and condescending, yet extremely lady-like, manners ; and whispers of all sorts were, as usual, afloat regarding the delay, while the breasts of the parties themselves, not excluding Lydia's father, were agitated with an anxious yet undefined feeling of disappointment.

The event of their union having naturally been treasured up by anticipation in the minds of the young couple, as the great incident of their lives, and looked forward to as the sum of their hopes for several years, Louis, when his plans of travel were completed, had returned to the Hall, and to take possession of his Castle, in the highest spirits, pleasing himself with early recollections, and glowing with passionate feelings, while his heart bounded with joy as he contemplated his own apparently happy prospects, and the plans of affection, duty, and ambition, which danced before his imagination. Some delay, to

be sure, had taken place, by sir Hugh's attachment to the Castle, from which he had not yet been removed ; but Louis had, by the old gentleman's wish, and to save him trouble, taken a suitable house for him near London, and done every thing he could for his comfort ; and though when he returned he found that a few pains and aches of the gout still detained him, yet, previous to the meeting in Oldwood about the library, preparations were actually in considerable forwardness for his departure.

But, to the astonishment of Louis, when he called at the Castle a day or two after that important event, with the good-natured intention of offering his services in arranging the details of the knight's journey, he found all the preparations put back, and the old man received him with the cold and dogged sternness of a man who has made up his mind to do an act of malevolent injustice. Instead of talking of his journey, he attacked the young man with reproaches

for irreligion, and even foreign infidelity, imported into this religious nation to turn the lower orders into complete blasphemers, as evinced in his scandalous opposition to the pious efforts of excellent men for the good of the people; and when his amazed auditor thought to wave these subjects, out of compassion to the weakness of the old man's mind, and urged the request to give up possession, according to what was right and to his own engagement, sir Hugh made use of such language, mixed with the cant of religion, even regarding Miss Orton and her father, in reference to the intended union of the families, and to Mr. Orton's harbouring in his house a scoffer and an atheist, as he chose to designate Mr. Jarman, as confounded Louis beyond measure, and cut him to the soul, not only from its gross injustice, and because sir Hugh had it so much in his power to annoy him, but because his pride in regard to himself, and his respect for the age of the knight, obliged

him to hear in silence what in other circumstances he would have personally resented.

When Louis, after repeated visits, perceived that sir Hugh was, from some unaccountable reasons connected with what had passed at the religious meeting in Oldwood, disposed in earnest to give him trouble, and that it might, from this cause, be some considerable time before he could take possession of this part of his property, he turned his thoughts to another estate of his in Scotland, to which he could carry his Lydia after the ceremony. But when he considered that the old mansion on the estate of Stonylands must be untenantable, without great alteration, and reflected also on the anxious feelings of Lydia's father, and the trial which the bare mention of their living so far separate would be to him and even to her, he saw fully the state in which he was placed. No suitable residence was to be had for them nearer than London, to reside in which the same objection

existed; and to burden even for a time the house of his father-in-law, was not, he thought, consistent with his dignity.

While he deliberated upon every plan that he could think of, he received letters from his agent in Scotland, or rather, his factor, as he is there named, giving an outline of several unexpected occurrences, which would require his immediate presence on his property in the north. Thus the lowering and threatening clouds of disappointment gathered rapidly round the horizon of his prospects, from quarters towards which he should never have turned to apprehend them; and the bright visions of felicity with which he had just returned to the scenes of his youth fled suddenly away into the distant and uncertain obscurities of some future time, which might never recal them as originally formed.

To a sanguine mind, as yet unchastened by the disappointments of the world, this tissue of unexpected circumstances occurring at the very

moment, and in the very matter of a man's intended marriage, was deeply vexatious. The affair of his property in Scotland troubled Mr. Stavely comparatively little: but he was annoyed by the changed sentiments and ingratitude of the man to whom his late uncle had been an incessant benefactor. And what made it worse was, to find this ingratitude justified in the prostituted phraseology of zeal for religion, coupled with ignorant and unjust, if not malevolent reproaches, offered to himself and his principles. The prospect of litigation to an indefinite extent with his late uncle's old friend, with all its harassing uncertainties and low manœuvring, together with the hurt feelings and undefinable fears of his Lydia, whose sensitive mind would, he knew, brood painfully over matters which to many would be but a sort of exciting game, formed altogether one of those distracting and disheartening rebuffs of fortune (as we are accustomed to speak) which sometimes make impres-

sions on fresh and sanguine minds, such as no circumstances or experience afterwards can fully erase.

The delicacy and pride of Louis's mind also made him ashamed, or at least extremely unwilling, to explain to Mr. Orton, much less to his daughter, this unexpected cause of the marriage being postponed. The beseeching eyes of Lydia, as she still watched his clouded countenance, smote him to the heart, as if he had been guilty of something himself, by which their mutual plans of happiness had, for the present at least, been frustrated. What was to be done? He had urged the old man by every representation consistent with his honour and delicacy, to give up possession; and, instead of a reply to the business itself, was answered in the cant of the lowest order of religionists, conveying advices and reproaches as if he had been a boy; in particular, for his intimacy with an atheist; for Mr. Jarman could be no less, when he had had the

presumption to throw ridicule upon godly men in the face of the whole people. At length it occurred to Louis that perhaps Mr. Hallam, with whom his intended father-in-law was on terms of familiar intimacy, might be able to influence the knight, if properly applied to by Mr. Orton, upon the subject; and this thought gave him courage to lay the whole matter before the old gentleman, who, if he could be induced to interfere, might be able to prevent the necessity for legal proceedings.

Mr. Orton heard Louis's statement with no small amazement; but his mind was upon the whole relieved by the disclosure, for he made light of the stubborn humour of sir Hugh, which he thought he should easily remove, and was quite pleased with the suggestions of his own mission to his neighbour, Mr. Hallam, which he undertook readily, quite confident that his old friend would zealously enter into his views, to do his best to prevent an act of such shameful

and unfeeling injustice to the young man as the knight seemed to threaten.

Proposing to take a drive to captain Hallam (as the latter was still called) that very morning, he was so full of the subject and so confident of success, that meeting Mr. Jarman on the grounds with a fishing-rod in his hand, he stopped him to talk of the matter. He spoke of it with expressions of surprise, that so simple a business should have given Mr. Stavely any trouble, as sir Hugh was really, he thought, a good kind of silly man, and boasted how soon his friend Hallam and himself should make up the matter between the knight and the alarmed young man. To all this, however, Mr. Jarman replied with a grave shake of the head, and seemed to think much more seriously of the matter than the squire had at all imagined.

“I am very sorry, sir,” he said, “to hear what you tell me, particularly as I consider myself to have been in a great degree the cause of all this,

by suffering myself to be persuaded to oppose these people in their religious fancies. I recollect cautioning Mr. Stavely at the time against speaking his sentiments in the presence of these spiteful zealots, by reminding him of the rancour of religious hate: but I did not then foresee that any thing I ventured to say would have drawn the usual *odium theologicum* upon the head of Mr. Stavely; nor did I know that any of their party had it in their power to visit him with any vexatious annoyance, either for himself or as my friend, else assuredly I should have suffered them to go as mad as the American shakers before I should have condescended to provoke their spite."

"It cannot be possible, sir," said the squire, whatever they may think of you, that the few words that Louis spoke at the meeting can be laid hold of to bring him into this trouble."

"It is something incredible, I confess; but it is quite possible and likely, for all that: par-

ticularly if that Mount Carmel man is at the bottom of it, which I strongly suspect to be the case. Pray what is that vulgar-looking man's name?"

" Hanby, sir ! Hanby, esquire, of Mount Carmel ! Ha, ha, ha ! The old British gentry will be ultimately elbowed out of the world by these pursy and pious upstarts. I wonder not at Stavely being so indignant, poor young fellow !"

" Indeed, sir, it is my opinion, that it is that Hanby, who exalted the poor deaf knight to the honour of being chairman of his meeting, who is at the bottom of this annoyance to Mr. Stavely ; and being a little acquainted with the low craft of these knowing religionists, I have but little hopes of success from your mission."

" But captain Hallam was always a good neighbourly fellow, and is a gentleman by family ; an honest roistering seaman, who will not surely desert the colours of good sense and justice, to

please a bullying dealer and chapman like Hanby."

"Hum! allow me to ask you, sir, by virtue of your penetration, do you believe this captain Hallam to be a man of sense and knowledge, who can think a little for himself upon occasion, and whose thoughts, when he chooses to think, are worth the trouble?"

"Upon my honour, sir, you should be slow in asking such questions of country gentlemen. In short, I never could accuse Hallam, honest fellow! of being burdened with what you would call sense and knowledge. He has the sense to distinguish between claret and butter-milk, if you allow him to *look at* them both; he knows the cat-heads of a ship, and has seen the lubber's hole at a distance; he can tell a long story tolerably well, only he repeats it too often: but as for thinking for himself, that is rather a staggering question, and reminds me of several things that I had forgotten. In truth, I am inclined

to be of opinion that he is one of those that would be quite happy to meet with such a man as Mr. Allmouth, who would save him all trouble in the shape of thinking; and not be displeased with such as Mr. Hanby, even though he led him by the nose. I think now, such as Mr. Allmouth, or yourself, could talk him into any opinion whatever in two or three sittings."

"Sir, you are quite complimentary this morning," said Mr. Jarman, bowing; "but, trust me, your embassy will be no joking matter, if you set out with any hope, and will only serve to give you vexation by turning out the *inner man* of these people. I am seriously sorry for Stavely. There is nothing more painful, nor gives more a feeling of self-degradation to noble minds such as his, than being dragged into contact and contention with the low hypocrisy and shallow capacity of the mean minds upon which this species of religious opinions usually fastens. And then the high conceptions that a man of

sense necessarily has of religion, as such, make the despicable prostitution of its terms by these people the more nauseous."

"I cannot allow myself to think, however, that they will persist in annoying Mr. Stavely after I have seen captain Hallam."

"Well, my dear sir, go in peace. Gird up your loins and go."

"Won't you accompany me, Mr. Jarman?"

"Would you really be so imprudent as to take me with you, sir, even supposing I were willing? My very name, announced at the door, would almost make them fly the house on my entrance, out of sheer horror at my impiety, because I could not, at the meeting, see the beauty of their schemes in the good cause. I tell you, sir, if you were to take with you even your venerable and sensible friend, the vicar of the Abbey, his very moderation and enlightened views would damn your cause."

"That is but little comfort to me. Still I

have hope from my own influence with Hallam."

" Well, sir, you will excuse me," and Mr. Jarman turned off to the left: " your sons and myself make a fishing-party on the lake to-day; where we shall have silent and rich nature only around us, and the blue heavens and fleecy clouds reflected in the still waters over which we are to sail. When we return from our healthful sport, we shall hear what success you will have in the muddy waters into which you are going to throw your line. But what will you do for *bait*, sir? These people will do nothing without a *bait* of some sort suitable for their filthy maws. God speed you, sir."

CHAPTER XIII.

TERRIBLE STORY OF A POACHER ; SHOWING THE
DANGEROUS EFFECTS WHICH MAY RESULT
FROM OPPOSITION TO RELIGION.

MR. ORTON arrived at the Hall in the evening, after his journey to Mr. Hallam's, in consternation at what the day had brought forth, and the serious nature of the business between Mr. Stavely and sir Hugh. As soon as he could leave the dinner table he retired to the library, and sent for Mr. Jarman and Mr. Stavely, knowing their anxiety to be informed of the fate of his mission.

" Gentlemen," said he, as soon as they were seated, " I have sent for you both, even at this late hour, to inform you of the complete failure of my attempts to-day to bring sir Hugh Salvage to any

sort of reason, and that we may consult together upon what is best to be done in this unfortunate affair ; which appears to be much more serious as affecting the interests of at least one of us, than I had ever dreamt could be the case. I see you are going to ask me what I could effect by captain Hallam ; and, to shorten the matter, I have to tell you, that he is quite, as he says himself, a new man ; he is flushed with some new religious notions put into his head by the new curate, Mr. Allmouth, which seem to have turned his brain : so that, instead of my having any influence with him, as formerly, he evidently regards me in the light of an enemy, as he does all others who are not smitten as himself, and who are above the hypocrisy of pretending to be so. He takes part already in the intrigues of the Mount Carmel director, and defends the stubborn injustice of sir Hugh (all for the good cause) with all the deaf zeal of a new-made convert, and all the simplicity of a dupe."

" I never took credit for extraordinary pene-

tration," said Mr. Jarman ; " but it is just as I feared. I hope, however, sir, that all this annoyance can be got over by a simple action of ejectment."

" I do not know, sir. I do not wish to pain or dishearten our young friend by any unnecessary apprehension ; but I fear an ejectment may not end the matter. In short, I have seen the whole of them to-day ; Mr. Hallam, sir Hugh, the Mount Carmel saint, and even his paltry attorney, with whom I had the degradation of being seated along with the others ; and I have heard things which more than astonish me."

" I hope, sir," said Louis calmly, " that they have not made you imagine that an English gentleman is to be put in fear by the insolent conspiracy of two or three brainless demagogues who cant about religion. The laws for the protection of our property and feelings are not to be set aside, I hope, either by bare-faced villainy, or old-womanish cant."

"I cannot give a direct reply to what you say just now, my dear Louis," said the old gentleman; "but if you will not think me tedious, I shall narrate the whole that occurred on my embassy, as Mr. Jarman calls it. Before I had got to the village on my way to Hallam's house, my coachman stopped at the request of some one on the road, and presently a person named Groom, who is by way of eminence called the Bookseller of Oldwood, came up to the door of the carriage, and entreated to say a few words to me. Mr. Groom is a man whom I respect much, as does every one who knows him; and seeing him in some agitation, I begged him to proceed freely to say what he wished. He informed me that his son, well known as a fine spirited youth, and much liked in the village, having long had liberty to shoot occasionally on the grounds of Lynch Castle, had, by the decoy of some companion, been unfortunately induced to follow his game into the adjoining grounds of

Mr. Hanby, who having some one on the watch, the youth was soon collared in the most ruffianly manner, and forthwith dragged before the squire of Mount Carmel for poaching.

“ ‘The squire,’ said Mr. Groom, ‘after treating my son in the most insulting manner, as I learned from one who was a bystander, calling him a ringleader of blackguards and poachers, and lecturing him before his servants about public morals, and his disregard of the laws of God and man, as if he had been a thief, and talking of the fearful effects of irreligion in the parish, had him taken away like a felon between two men to the house of Mr. Hallam, who you know is in the commission of the peace this year, and they are now actually about sending him to the jail of the county as a poacher.’

“ Here the old man,” continued Mr. Orton, “ was so affected by the thought that he could hardly proceed, and at length said, that he had just been on his way to the Hall when my car-

riage came up, to petition me, as formerly in the commission, that I would for humanity's sake interfere for his poor son, and save him from the horror of being sent to jail."

"What, is it Charles Groom?" exclaimed Mr. Stavely; "I remember him very well as the most intelligent lad in the village. He used to make my trout-flies long ago, and follow me in all my fishing sports. I never knew a finer lad of his condition!"

"Well," continued Mr. Orton, "I was naturally concerned for the poor youth, whom I have remarked from an infant, and thinking it hard that, for a fault which from his disposition was probably little intended, he should be subjected to the contamination of a jail, I promised his distressed father to exert myself on his behalf, and hastened forward to the captain's house with both affairs on my hands. When I arrived there, I learned that he had shortly before set off for Lynch Castle, ordering young Groom, and a

whole cavalcade of the country people, who had attended the poor fellow, to follow him to the Castle, as another messenger had just arrived with information that sir Hugh Salvage had additional charges to prefer against the prisoner.

“ When I arrived at the Castle, an evasive and insolent attempt was made by that man Hanby, who, I learned, had arrived before me, to deny me admittance among the others; for he sent his attorney to me, who, in a sneaking and fawning and insinuating way, tried to misrepresent the character of the youth, and by other arguments to persuade me not to interfere. I was so indignant at the base cunning of all this, that I never made the slightest reply to the man, but walked past him into the room where they were all assembled; the accuser, Hanby, himself present, and talking loud, evidently bullying himself into an ascendancy over the others. They were somewhat startled at my appearance, and Mr. Hallam began to stammer and

look silly, while the regular clerk, whom they had somehow induced to be present, seemed almost as much gratified by my appearance as the poor youth who stood before them as prisoner.

" I found that they had actually made out a commitment against young Groom, whom the director seemed most anxious to have hurried off to jail ; for it appeared that, fearing that his own charge was not sufficiently strong, and that it had too much the appearance of an accident for his purpose, he had the meanness to set off himself instantly to the Castle, and by representing to sir Hugh the urgent necessity of checking poaching in its earliest stage, and that this youth's father was a doubtful man, and no better than a deist, while the fellow himself was destroying the game round the whole country, persuaded the weak old man to deny the permission that he had given to the youth as extending to the

last six months, and to join him in committing him, and prosecuting him at the circuit."

" Well, certainly," interrupted Mr. Jarman, " this outruns my suspicions of what these sort of people are capable; I see it all clearly. You recollect, gentlemen, that a respectable looking old man, who I understand is this youth's father, spoke against something said by that Hanby at the religious meeting in the village? I never knew a more unmanly set of canting scoundrels."

" Be so kind as to proceed, sir," said Mr. Stavely, smiling; " you quite amuse me."

" I immediately demanded a sight of the commitment, in the drawing of which the clerk, a respectable man, had, I perceived, purposely introduced some informalities to save the youth, as he seemed to see through the motives of his prosecutors; and some recollections at the moment flashing across my mind, I instantly turned to sir Hugh, and informed him, that I

was present one day, early in the year, when young Groom meeting us in the avenue, and being addressed by sir Hugh upon some business of his father's, the youth took opportunity to ask the accustomed permission, which was granted without limitation of time, and evidently meant to extend until the season ended; and that if they were disposed to persist in a prosecution upon grounds so frivolous, a proceeding involving consequences so serious to the feelings and morals of the youth and his companions, I should be ready to testify as to the permission of one of the prosecutors, as well as to my knowledge of his general conduct and character. I could not help saying further, that I was extremely concerned to observe their inconsiderate readiness to commence prosecutions for poaching in this hitherto peaceful and moral neighbourhood; a zeal which was likely to exasperate the peasantry and increase the evil; that, for my own part, I

had hitherto acted upon a different principle. I added, that locking and guarding frequently made thieves, and that harshness begot disrespect and opposition. I told them, moreover, that I had winked at several trifling acts of this kind upon my own estate; the consequence of which had been, that now I never heard of such things. In fine, I was convinced that any one of the country people would inform against another who should attempt to despoil me in this way."

"Very good, sir," said Mr. Jarman; "I quite approve of your policy."

"I should like to have been present when you stated this," said Mr. Stavely, "and to have seen Hanby's look during your lecture."

"I cannot say that he looked otherwise than merely as if I had been arguing against one of his favourite religious dogmas, which he was determined to maintain, and all opposition to which he would be sure to treat with anger

or contempt. But I fear I am becoming too minute."

"Pray, my dear sir, go on in your own way," said both his auditors.

"Sir Hugh could not deny what I reminded him of, and stammered and talked of the necessity for wholesome severity towards the people of the village, who, he agreed with his pious friend Mr. Hanby, had evidently been very ill instructed in religious matters; to which state of heterodoxy was, no doubt, to be attributed those outbreaks of wickedness. All this evil was, however, likely to be rectified by the praiseworthy efforts now in progress. For the present, however, he should abandon his share in the prosecution: and as for his respected friend, Mr. Hanby, he had no doubt that he would act with his usual wisdom in this matter.

"Captain Hallam meantime looked in the disappointed countenance of the director for a hint how he should act, while Mr. Law, the

clerk, seeing a favourable opportunity, gave it as his opinion, contrary to the objections of Hanby's adviser, Strip, that the withdrawing of sir Hugh, and my testimony as to previous character, would in all likelihood be fatal to the charge of the first prosecution. Mr. Hanby now seeing himself in a very unpopular predicament, if he tried to proceed upon his charge, pulled in his breath, and prepared to put the best face on his chagrin. He began to look solemn and pious, and pretending the deepest concern for the youth, and the greatest reluctance to prosecute, gave himself credit for the sweetest feelings of justice and humanity, and talked of the pain that the simple discharge of his duty gave him in cases such as this; but while he should rejoice heartily in the truth of the character I had given the youth, he could not help having strong doubts as to its correctness, from what he had observed of himself and his parents. And having during his speech insinuated several left-handed compli-

ments to my humanity on this occasion, which, he said, was attributable to my bias towards the young man because he evidently was incorrigible in religion, consented to his discharge, which he did with a canting and smooth-tongued admonition, although his heart was burning with vexation and his very look was that of baffled revenge.

“ Having finished, he rose, and directing a significant look to Mr. Hallam and sir Hugh, and then towards me, he departed, followed by his servile attorney. But had you seen the grateful looks of the young man, at every word I said on his behalf, and heard the shout with which he was received on his discharge by those who waited for him without, you would consider me well rewarded, and be also much pleased to witness that feeling of dread with which a jail is still, I am happy to say, regarded in this part of the country.

“ My triumph, in regard to the youth, ope-

rated, however, I have reason to think, against my success in the principal business upon which I had met these gentlemen. When all had withdrawn, excepting the knight, Mr. Hallam, and myself, I thought it best to address sir Hugh on the business in the presence of our mutual friend, expecting the support of the latter, from the impression I had just made. When, however, I endeavoured in the gentlest terms to show sir Hugh the impropriety and even unfairness of his retaining possession of the Castle after the stipulated period was expired, and the disappointment and pain which any further delay would give to Mr. Stavely ; and that he was bound to give up possession as early as possible, not only by every consideration of honour and feeling, but by his own engagement ; you would have been astonished had you seen the fury he worked himself into, and the agitation he suffered, from some unaccountable dislike he had taken to you, Mr. Stavely, and from his de-

termination to annoy you, by keeping you out of your property, conflicting with his remaining notions of justice and honour, which I strongly urged upon him.

" I could, however, get nothing from him, but abuse of you both, for your opposition to the pious plans of one of the most valuable men, (to use his words), who had for a long period been raised up by Providence to bless this ungodly spot. To this were added invectives and insinuations against myself, which only made me smile, and which I need not repeat. When I appealed to captain Hallam, who sat by, he only replied coldly, that sir Hugh was certainly the best judge of his own conduct, and was, he was convinced, as well as the excellent man who had just left them, actuated by the best motives in that cause which he or they had thought proper to pursue, not only for the furtherance of true religion, of which he knew them both to be the best friends, but for the real good, as it would

turn out, of Mr. Stavely himself; who, he was sorry to observe, had returned from his travels with a most dangerous antipathy to religion, and had commenced by showing a disposition which could not but give just offence to excellent men who devoted their best exertions to the good cause.

“ When I endeavoured to show that there was no connexion between what I argued for, and any peculiar notions of religious duty, and that I pleaded for a mere act of justice and civil right, which must be sanctioned and enforced by every system of religion, and which the laws would eventually compel, if Louis was obliged to have recourse to them, he merely replied that, when regardless and wilful young men set themselves up to ridicule the opinions and detract from the merit of their pious elders, while engaged in every good word and work, they must be content to bear the consequences if Providence had put into the hands of those who

were so engaged a rod to beat them with stripes ; for, as the rev. Mr. Allmouth judiciously observed, in all similar cases, Christians were specially enjoined to be wise as serpents, as well as harmless as doves ; the former of which qualities was most necessary in these last days, for it was particularly foretold that perilous times would come."

" Ha, ha, ha !" laughed Mr. Jarman incessantly. " Upon my honour, sir, you rehearse their cant admirably : that sailor has made wonderful progress in the faith."

" I don't see any thing so alarming in all this," said Mr. Stavely ; " the knight said much worse, and more dark things to me, than any thing you have stated."

" I have more to tell you yet, sir," said the old gentleman. " When I made mention of enforcing your right by law, sir Hugh smiled ominously, and said with a haughty sneer, that Providence had, for wise purposes, put it into

his power to rectify the doting errors of the late Arthur Stavely, as you would probably find to your cost, should you presume to resort to human laws ; that he would not have been aware of this advantage over you, but by the anxious friendship of Mr. Hanby, aided by several shrewd discoveries made by his pious law-agent, Mr. Strip ; and that, in short, you, Mr. Stavely, might try what heresy and irreligion would do for you ; for he could defy you to show any documents by which your late uncle held Lynch Castle ; and that, with regard to it, his foolish will, as he called it, in your favour, was not worth a farthing."

" Good Heaven !" exclaimed Stavely, " the ingratitude of all this to my late worthy uncle is more shocking to me than even the loss of the property, if I am to lose it. But still I am not able to account to my own satisfaction for the inveterate hatred of these people against me. And as for religion, if I know myself, it was my

high reverence for what I think religion that caused me to say a word in opposition to them."

" You were also charged, Mr. Stavely," continued the squire, " with refusing, in the most insolent manner, to sell to that Hanby some small trifling corner of your property, merely, as they aver, out of spite; because it was contiguous to Mount Carmel, and would have been a convenience to Mr. Hanby."

" Gracious Heaven! what will these people next assert?" he exclaimed. " A proposal was made to me by Hanby, through a poor fawning man, to sell a small field; which I refused to think of, and answered so in the mildest manner, because I did not wish to diminish the Lynch estate, and because the man craftily tried to undervalue the land; as if I had been a fool, or a needy person who should be tempted with ready money."

The further conversation upon this subject, in which Louis had the pain of listening to fresh

instances of gross misrepresentation of his conduct and motives, sank deeply into his feelings; and even Mr. Jarman, shrewd as he was, and long acquainted with the world, was at a loss how to advise the unhappy youth in the present unlooked-for state of his affairs and prospects. At length, after some discussion, it was agreed, that the wisest course was to take no legal step in the case for the present; that Mr. Stavely's marriage being in the meantime necessarily postponed, he should proceed to Scotland, to attend to what was required of him in regard to his property there; and that matters in regard to sir Hugh and the Lynch estate should be for the present left as they were: for Mr. Jarman argued, that some event would, at no great distance of time, occur, to expose the knavery of these people, in the neighbourhood or to each other, which would furnish a favourable opportunity for Louis to gain by law or reason the possession of his property.

When Louis, after this painful discussion, had

retired to rest, and begun, on his sleepless pillow, to reflect that his union with Lydia was now indefinitely postponed ; that his departure from the Hall, and all that interested him there, was fixed for the day after the morrow, for his barren and hilly estate in the north, where, with disappointed feelings and broken fortunes, he was to be engaged in local disputes and provincial squabbles, no doubt connected with religion, as he understood they were, about the patronage of a kirk near Stonylands ; that the period of his return was most uncertain ; and that his marriage with Lydia might in fact never take place ; he was driven almost frantic.

The morning dawned without his fevered spirits having been at all refreshed with sleep. He rose early and breakfasted alone, both because his own thoughts made him little capable of general conversation, and from another feeling, common to minds of high honour and independence, namely, a jealousy of the usual

disrespect with which common society visits disappointment in matters of fortune, and a mental pride, which rises from consciousness of its own value, in proportion as circumstances occur to withdraw the flattery of the world. Although there was little occasion for this feeling at Orton Hall, nevertheless the disappointment of his hopes and intentions made him almost wish for the moment of his departure from it; and although he knew the true heart of his Lydia, he could not overcome his delicacy, in his peculiar circumstances, which felt distress at the thoughts of seeing her until this painful matter should be explained to her by some other than himself.

While embarrassing himself with these thoughts, he met Mr. Jarman without, who readily undertook to see Miss Orton for him, to tell her the chief facts that had occurred, and prepare her for his departure on the following morning. Meantime, the anxiety of Helen Spencer, Lydia's

cousin, for a wedding, and her zeal in the important consideration of marriage-dresses, had not allowed her to wait even until the day was named ; but she must write to London milliners and other artists of costume, on the part of Lydia, for advice in these interesting matters.

A reaction had also taken place in the mind of Lydia herself, from the circumstances of her father's visit to the Castle, and his late consultations with Louis ; for in the alternations of fear and hope which are our portion in the present life, depressing apprehensions gladly give way to the influence of the trifles upon which the mind is ready to seize as an excuse for indulging again the dreams of happy anticipation. Another incident contributed to divert her mind into a train of pleasing thoughts at this juncture. A parcel had this very morning arrived from London, in answer to Helen's request, with plates and patterns, accompanied by many judicious and profound opinions upon the dresses most

becoming a bridal occasion. Over these, with female interest, Lydia and her cousin were consulting, with all the pleasure, on the part of the former, of revived hope, and of the persuasion with which Helen's representations had impressed her, that her former fears of some misfortune having happened to Louis were only the anxious creation of her own mind. At this juncture, Mr. Jarman announced a request for a few minutes' private conversation with Miss Orton.

"Well!" he said to himself, as he paced up and down the entrance-hall, before venturing up stairs to Lydia, "we are strange beings, that is certain. There is almost nothing we do even for others, as Rochefoucault says, that does not partake of selfishness. I have undertaken with readiness to be the bearer of a communication, in an affair of the heart, to a most interesting female, which must affect her feelings with deep suffering, as a par-

taker in the disappointments of the man with whose happiness her own is linked both for the present and the future ; and yet I feel an interest almost like a pleasure in what I have to do. How can this be ? for I am sure I never could find pleasure before in giving pain. Is it that, never having been able to inspire love for myself, I have a painful pleasure in observing the working of that powerful passion for another in the countenance and bosom of such as Lydia Orton ; and that I can enjoy a torturing experiment upon the feelings of a beautiful girl, while the news I bring her makes her eyes swim with the sorrow of her heart ? Really, I dare not confess myself in this matter."

Mr. Jarman found it not so easy, however, to deliver himself, as he had supposed before he came into Lydia's presence. Her eyes fixed themselves with such a searching expression upon his countenance before he had got two sentences out, and her hands were so wrought into each

other, as if she were preparing herself for some dreadful communication, that the very intense interest she showed in what he was about to say almost prevented his utterance; and while she sat breathlessly looking in his face, he told her, in a faltering voice, that from various unexpected circumstances the Lynch estate was withheld from Louis for the present, and that his departure, for an indefinite time, would take place on the morrow. In making this communication, Mr. Jarman was quite awkward and embarrassed; and when it was over, he sat silent with a sort of shame at his own want of adroitness in making so delicate an explanation.

Lydia heard what he did say with calmness; but a few sentences sufficed. The paleness that overspread her face showed the sinking of her heart in disappointment and dread; but she only got words to reply, that she was rejoiced to learn withal that Louis was not to blame, and that he had at least made her father his confidant in this

business, since he had not chosen to give the same confidence to her; and added, that wherever he went, or whatever he should do with her father's esteem, she should of course wish him happiness.

The proud struggling of a pretty woman to master her feelings and suppress her tears is painfully interesting; but this Mr. Jarman had scarce time to witness before Lydia took her leave; and eluding the anxiety of Helen, who watched for her return, she got to her own room, to indulge her thoughts in silence. The scene had now shifted; the pictures of happiness her fancy had formed were now obscured and gone; the anticipations of her youth, upon which her mind had rested for more than seven years, were scattered, perhaps never to be reassembled and realized; the arrangements of her judgment, and the wishes of her heart, were equally defeated, and the door was now opened in the uncertain future for sickening hope deferred, or ultimate calamity.

The first burst of her tears was over, when Helen Spencer entered the apartment with the patterns of wedding-dresses in her hand. The surprise of her light-hearted friend upon seeing Lydia in this state was as great as was afterwards her disappointment, when she learned that no wedding was to take place. Helen's was one of those sanguine minds which survey things only in the bounding joy and confidence of hope, or from the depth of despair. Passing rapidly from one extreme to the other, and reminding her afflicted friend of her impression, when Louis returned, that something would occur to prevent their mutual happiness, she only contributed at the present moment to aggravate her friend's despondency.

When the hour of dinner arrived, Louis was relieved to find that she was in the drawing-room before him; but by this time her reflecting mind had soothed itself into perfect calmness by its own thoughts; and she received him, and took

his arm as they proceeded to dinner, with modest confidence, and lifted her eyes upon him as he addressed her with that thoughtful smile which seemed to say, “I think I understand the delicacy that made you rather distant to me of late; but assuredly my love is not of a kind to come and go with the vicissitudes of fortune.”

When the company had retired from the dinner table, she and Louis found themselves together in the ante-room, standing in the recess of a window, gazing unconsciously upon the moon, which was now up, and shone brightly on the waters of the lake. The lovers looked alternately without, and then in each other’s faces, as if they had something that they wished to say, yet knew not how to begin.

At length Louis, pointing to a clump of trees that, with its dark shadow, broke the bright moonlight on the level avenue, a spot where he and Lydia used to meet in former days, he passionately said, “Lydia, can it be the altering

power of fortune that makes me feel, as I now do, almost afraid to ask you to meet me for a few moments by yonder clump? You will remember the spot, Lydia—at least, *I* remember it. You hesitate. I cannot bear to hear you refuse. If you *can*, refuse me this!" and he rushed past her, and went out by himself.

He paced backwards and forwards under the clump, musing on former days, and on his wandering with Lydia among these avenues, when he perceived in the moonlight the shadow of her figure coming towards him from the mansion. She put her hand in his, as she came forward, with such frankness, that he was softened into self-blame for his last sentence; when, after proceeding onwards for a few moments without speaking, he felt moved by her seeming emotion, and said, "Lydia, you have come out to meet me here as I wished—speak to me!"

She said nothing, but trembled as she hung on his arm.

"Your meeting me here at this hour is, under all the circumstances, a condescension I scarcely expected," resumed Louis.

"A condescension, Louis?" and she looked up in his face.

They walked on in silence.

"I think it right to be candid with you, Lydia," he at length said. "You may have partly learned that, from a circumstance which I but lately remember to have heard talked of,—namely, that the east wing of Lynch Castle was burned before I can remember,—my late uncle's principal papers have been destroyed. It may thus, from the unaccountable hatred and low craft of the present possessor, be extremely difficult for me to certify my uncle's title, or establish my own for the Castle and estate."

"That is a misfortune——"

"It certainly is most unfortunate! inasmuch as——"

“ I did not think, Louis, we had come out to talk of estates and castles.”

“ It may, indeed, be quite unnecessary for me to explain further. I dare say, Lydia, you are fully aware of all ; and God forbid that I should blame you for paying due attention to circumstances of fortune.”

“ Louis !”

“ I feel highly gratified, however, Lydia,—for I speak with former familiarity,—by your confiding frankness under my altered circumstances. But your reflecting judgment will point out to you the path of prudence, as my affairs have turned out ; and I should be most ungrateful for all the delight I have had in your society, if I did not rejoice in your happiness, and follow you with my prayers, and——”

“ I could not have believed this——”

“ I had as little expectation of it as yourself, Lydia, when I returned from my tedious travels ;

but in respect of mere loss of fortune, I am content. I confess, however, I cannot so soon forget the days when you and I——But, not to be childish, misfortune softens the heart, Lydia, and exposes all its latent weakness. I may, perhaps, be pardoned after all, as this is the last night I am to spend among these scenes, where my boyhood was spent ; and as early recollections, associated with yourself, Lydia, crowd upon my thoughts——Still you are silent,” he continued, after a pause, “ but I can get over all these things as well as——”

“ You can, Louis!”

“ Lydia, you are offended with me, for being unable to bear the pain of telling you in person that our union, which I have still looked forward to in all my wanderings, is thrown, at the very appointed time, again into the uncertain womb of the future, if not entirely.”

“ Louis, I do not say that you have offended me.”

“ Well, then—still silent? The cold seems to affect you; let us return instantly.”

“ No, no!”

“ Let me wrap the mantle close. Don’t tremble so, Lydia; why this emotion? Good heavens! Lydia, my love, speak to me!”

“ That one word——” her voice failed her.

“ Lydia, my love, I never saw you so! I cannot bear this—seat yourself here.”

“ Louis, my love!” was all she could utter, and she burst into tears.

“ That one word,” she continued sobbing, “ has relieved me: *these* were the terms in which we used to speak to each other, Louis. What have I done, that you should address me in this cold manner of late? And the language you have just held, I feel to be most cruel!”

“ My dearest Lydia, I have mistaken your own manner; but my mind has been so much occupied with my altered prospects of late, that I thought——”

“ Louis, let me interrupt you,” she said, dry-

ing her tears. “ What is it, do you think, that is most cutting to the feelings of a woman, from the man to whom she has given her heart ? Is it not want of confidence ? Is it not suspicion that the ever-changing circumstances of fortune are sufficient to alter her feelings, to root up her affection ? ”

“ Lydia, forgive me. I ought to have known your true heart ; but could hardly suppose that in these days — ”

“ Did I ever give you reason, Louis, to suppose that alteration of circumstances would do away all that has passed between us ? ”

“ Do not reproach me at the very hour of our parting, dearest Lydia. I see now into the very bottom of your soul.”

“ I was never dark to you, Louis.”

“ I cannot bear being reproached with my own weakness : my mind is harassed and unhinged with this strange disappointment, chiefly on your account. Lydia, my dearest, only forgive me.”

“ There”—her cheek met his, and their tears mingled.

“ Now I am happy. Better times, Lydia, are undoubtedly before us ; and our union hereafter will be more sweet from this taste of bitter parting.”

A few days from this period had brought many changes to the company at the Hall. Louis and Lydia had parted, and he had not only gone to Scotland, but taken with him Mr. Jarman, who insisted upon bearing his young friend company part of the way, as he now meant to go upon a projected long ramble ; and the captain Morrison, whom we mentioned as having arrived with the young men, was also allowed to depart with the others, as now no wedding was to take place. George Orton, and his younger brother, who had only come to the country to witness their sister’s marriage, also added to the other regrets (Helen Spencer’s not the least), by soon after departing for London. The gossips of the neighbourhood had many tough disputes in favour of

their different theories of the causes of the sudden scattering of the marriage party, and of lady Lydia's not having become Mrs. Stavely of the Castle.

Mr. Hanby and sir Hugh enjoyed a triumph, and saw the hand of Providence clearly displayed in the punishment of the godless men who ridiculed and opposed the good work ; and the quiet inmates of Orton Hall, with that simple moralizing, by which virtuous minds console themselves under disappointment, had returned again to the contented, yet dull, routine of country life.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE FURTHER ADVENTURES OF MR. CREEVY
IN THE GOOD CAUSE.

WE left our old friend, Thomas Creevy, a few chapters back, in sorrowful dumps, anxious to turn his back on the godless town of Donchester. He endeavoured to console himself by reflecting deeply on the benefits and blessings of tribulation. He concluded sensibly, in the language by which all such cases as his are readily helped out, that the trials and buffetings which had as yet been his only recompense for his efforts in the good cause, ought only to stimulate him to “greater and greater” exertions, and the encountering of more terrible afflictions, in that blessed work to which he felt in his heart that he had been specially called.

Mr. Creevy was an early man, and being anxious to get out of the place where he had spent so unprofitable a time, he was labouring his way on the outskirts of Donchester, proceeding towards home, on his heavy stumbling horse, while the road was yet moist with the dew of night, and while he could barely distinguish the hedges between which he passed, through the thick haze of the morning. The sun was scarcely to be discovered, though his warm influence was felt, for as yet he was only “wading through the mist;” and the birds in the fields skirting the road piped their notes clear and distinct; but they were still like “the viewless wind,” which “bloweth where it listeth, and the sound whereof you hear, but cannot tell whence it cometh, nor whither it goeth.” But the mist gradually cleared away as Creevy plodded further into the country: the villas seen from the road sides peeped one by one through the clumps of woodland surrounding, and their windows glanced cheerfully

in the morning sun. Afterwards the horizon lengthened out on each side over plains and rivers ; the clouds flitted to the tops of the hills in the distance, where they lingered for a time, until they were borne away by the light mountain wind ; and at length the rich and variegated landscape of English rural scenery displayed itself unreservedly to the new-born day.

Mr. Creevy jogged leisurely along, musing and reflecting as deeply as he was able, sometimes on his adventures in Donchester, sometimes on the marvellous light let into his mind from the quickening ministrations of Mr. All-mouth, and sometimes on the knotty points of doctrine which were hid from the wise of this world, but which were to him as clear as daylight ; and anon, while the smell of the autumnal fields wafted refreshingly across his sense in the morning breeze, the comfortable farm-houses, and distant diverging lanes and glades, struck his eye, and diverted his thoughts to cheerful

admiration. For Divine Providence has benevolently bestowed upon many a rude mind, and limited understanding, a spice of homely romance, very easy, we may grant, to be turned into crazy enthusiasm, but which, if left to itself, is happy in the enjoyment of ghost stories, and far-off wonders in winter nights, and is not insensible to the beauties of external nature.

The pious brick-maker, as he proceeded along, meditated and reasoned to his own great satisfaction ; and feasted on his own thoughts in all the luxury of confident ignorance : he did not, honest man, want for an act of the mind usually called *thinking*, such as it was, no more than his reverend religious preceptor, Mr. Allwood, or any other of this numerous class of theological philosophers of our day ; nor will the world, perhaps, ever be greatly at a loss to meet with an extensive and noisy breed of this sort, so abundant and so admirably described by Butler in his days. Like them,

“ His notions fitted things so well,
That which was which he could not tell;
But oftentimes mistook the one
For th’ other, as great clerks have done.”

And, as has been often quoted,

— “ he a rope of sand could twist,
As tough as learned Sorbonist:
And weave fine cobwebs, fit for skull
That ’s empty when the moon is full.”

However, the more he thought, the more he delighted in his cogitations, which, to say truth, were but second-hand nonsense after all, culled from some of the loose absurd *discoveries* of his extravagant teacher. His meditations were at length disturbed by the noise of horsemen behind him, and up cantered two young fellows extremely well mounted, who looked hard at him as they passed, and then with a jeering oath, or some such rude expression, scampered on without taking any farther notice.

“ What a dreadful world of wickedness this is!” soliloquized Mr. Creevy; “ and what a happy

and highly favoured man am not I, who bask in the peculiar light and favour of Heaven, while the world in general, as is perfectly evident, is just galloping straight to perdition, like those profane youths who have passed!"

He was the more confirmed in these reflections, when coming up to a decent inn by the road side, he perceived the young men drinking at the inn door, and making an ungodly-looking hostler, and a giddy bar-maid, laugh immoderately, no doubt, at some profane jest. Creevy was strongly disposed to enter upon the good work, if, peradventure, he might be useful in the spiritual concerns of these young men ; but although he could very well have joined them according to the flesh in their spiritual exercises, for he had not, more than they, been without a sensible feeling of that natural thirst which arises in the throats of men of his condition at the sight of a comely public house ; yet perceiving that they had long swashing whips in their hands,

and were moreover fiery-looking fellows, he considered judiciously, that as for the drink, that would cost money, and the love of money and zeal for sectarian religion generally, as is well known, increase together; and as for the opportunity of usefulness, all things are lawful thought he, but all things are not expedient; and so he went on his way.

This incident, and the passing of two or three military waggons in the early morning, filled with soldiers' wives and other baggage, were the only things that interrupted the current of his meditations; and he was proceeding slowly, chuckling over the thoughts of his being so dear a favourite of Heaven, and one of the elect, when so many blackguard fellows of all descriptions in this wicked world were running pell-mell to a certain place, when his attention was attracted by a soldier and his wife by the road side. The poor man seemed in considerable alarm, for his wife appeared to be ill, and certainly unable to

travel, being near the time of her delivery. As Creevy rode up, the soldier leaving the woman on the bank, and a little girl playing beside her, came forward in a hesitating way, and after eyeing our friend for a moment, touched his cap in military fashion, and screwing up his courage for an encounter which was new to him, said :

“ Sir, you will excuse me ;—I beg pardon, mister, for halting you on your line of march ; but I am obliged to speak to you about my wife here. We are on the march ourselves, sir, and she, poor thing, is not able to bear the shaking of the cart. You may see her condition, sir ; and my pocket is rather low, which you know is many a good man’s case, sir ; and being left behind my comrades, I have nothing to give poor Mary, God help her ! nor to pay our quarters at the public house in the rear. Indeed, sir, I am very much distressed.”

“ Ay, ay, friend, that is the fruit of going a soldiering. If you had, instead of running

after the profane sound of drum and fife, been fighting the fight of faith, and the good cause, you would have found more real profit in it, my friend."

" As for that, sir, I never looked for much profit, although I have fought like my comrades ; but since I came home to old England, I have lived very happy with Mary until now, thank God !"

" Indeed, friend," replied Creevy, shaking his head solemnly, " out of your own mouth you are condemned ; for had you been walking in the right path, and eschewing evil, you never could have enjoyed a day's happiness in the profane life of a soldier. This comes of not following the Lord."

" I have followed lord Wellington, sir, in many a hungry march ; but I never felt it then, sir. It is the case of my poor wife, sir, that makes me speak to you. God help her, poor thing ! Look at her, sir !"

“ The time of affliction, friend, is the proper time for sowing the good seed of the word. Our afflictions are nothing but blessings in disguise, friend; and now, as Providence has sent me, in the very nick of time, to confer upon you an unspeakable good, if you will listen to me — ”

Here the soldier, beginning to marvel, cast a look round to his wife, who sat on the bank, watching anxiously the success of her husband; but she made a sign to him to come near her, and having, with a woman’s penetration, at least in affairs of generosity, remarked upon what was passing, said, “ William, dear! do not make little of thyself, talking and listening to that man. I see he’s one o’ the religious sort, that ’ll preach and pray thee to death, but if thou’rt not precisely like himself, would not give thee or me a shilling to save us from starving.”

The soldier, who seemed accustomed to obey the hints of his better half, as much as those of his

superior officer, returning back to the Oldwood man with a look as if he been going to the charge, said, defyingly, "Sir, I've heard the regimental parson before I heard you, and he never came down upon our rear with his religion on the march. But I say, sir, if ye have a morsel o' the charity of a heathen in you, ye'll give me some help for that poor sick woman."

"I see—I see—I see how it is!" exclaimed Creevy. "You are just like the rest of the ungodly world. It is money and world's goods that you want. But one thing is needful; and I would advise you—"

"It is very needful just now," said the soldier, despondingly; "and truly I am never above taking sensible advice, neither; for, to tell truth, I've been but a wild fellow in my time." Becoming impatient, however, while the Oldwood man fumbled in his pocket, he again cast his eye round to his wife, who gave him an admonitory look,

which imboldened him again to say, fiercely, “Sir, I believe I was wrong in axing the like of you for any relief in my trouble.”

Creevy had had his hand for some time turning round the money in his pocket; and he first grasped a crown; but as he thought of the evident impatience of the soldier under his exhortation, it was changed for half a crown. When he further thought, while the soldier was speaking, of the many demands of the good cause, and the crying claims of the various religious societies upon christian men like himself, the half-crown dwindled down into a shilling; and then, when he recollect ed that he had just denied himself a comfortable pot of ale at the inn which he had passed, which this very shilling would have more than procured, he saw clearly what a scandalous shame it would be for him, that he should be stinting himself of the necessary comforts to which Providence had entitled him, and then give away the good money to beggarly people

that he knew nothing of, and who, for aught he knew, might be arrant blackguards; for they evidently had no love for the word. At length, he took from his pocket a stray penny, and put it complacently into the soldier's extended hand.

While the poor man stood looking doubtfully at the penny, Creevy was fumbling in another pocket, out of which he brought a religious tract, which he forthwith handed to the soldier, while the poor woman was looking with strong anxiety at the several donations her husband was receiving for her.

"Friend," said Creevy, "the times are so hard, that I cannot spare thee a larger sum at present; but take that tract, and meditate seriously upon what is therein written; and if it is made to work effectually in thee, thou wilt yet bless the day when, like the good Samaritan, I found thee by the way-side."

"Sir," said the soldier, after a moment, in

which he kept looking first at the tract and then at the copper, “ do you offer a soldier, when he applies to you in his need, *a penny?* If the king’s head was not on it, I’d trample it in the dust. You hard-hearted old wretch! I wish it was grape-shot for your sake!” And, saying this, he made the coin spin past the head of the Oldwood missionary with a whiz, that caused his very jade to stumble under him; and now, thinking his valuable life to be in danger, Creevy clapped spurs to his beast, and away they fled from this ungodly Philistine of a soldier ; while the soldier returned, and sat down on the bank near his wife, folding his arms on his breast, and watching the retreat of the other with a sort of dogged scorn.

The Oldwood man was not yet out of sight, when the two young fellows whom he had passed at the inn door came cantering up: but the poor woman, who, though she had had least hope from the application to Creevy, when she heard how he talked, was, from the state she was in, the

first to be affected by the disappointment. Vexation at the fruitless degradation of her anxious husband (of whom, after all, she was proud), and bitter indignation at the *man*, who, himself in comfortable circumstances, could refuse even a word of sympathy to a woman in her state of helplessness and distress, while all the while his mouth was full of the cant of religion, had by this time so wrought upon her feelings, that from a burst of tears and the usual unjust yet not inexcusable exclamations against all who professed religion, she was almost in hysterics, and the despairing soldier was in a state but little better from witnessing it.

As the young men came forward, and began to inquire with much concern why they sat there, and what caused their evident distress, the soldier only noticed them by looking more dark and dogged, as he sat muttering thus to himself: "I'll be shot if I can say another word. I never thought to ha' tried the begging

—I would not even ha' begged *my life*, but I think it's as useless work as firing blank cartridge at a dead mare, when the best o' them, although neither short of hard cash nor convertible religion, won't open their haversacks to a poor fellow and his wife."

While the distressed soldier thus murmured, his wife looking up in the faces of the strangers, who had by this time dismounted, began in broken sentences to inform them of her destitute state, left behind the others, and unable to reach their quarters, and of the ill success of the soldier's first attempt at soliciting "the cold hand of charity." Encouraged by the compassionate looks and handy services of the men, who were now tenderly raising and encouraging her, she informed them further of the state of her feelings, and gratefully said, that "a kind word did her good, and settled her nerves, after the way she had been treated by a poor-hearted preaching body that had just left them."

"Who is it you talk of, good woman?" inquired the strangers.

"That there butter-milk dragoon, that you might ha' seen pass," said the soldier, now rallying his spirits and striking in: "Don't you see him shouldering off yonder like a suttler's cadger? He's nothing but a pioneer to some methodist parson."

"Well, but he didn't do you any harm, did he, good woman?"

"No bodily harm certainly, gentlemen, my husband being by; except what might have happened by his vexing my feelings; and I need not be vexed, I am sure, after what I know of them o' his sort. A smooth-tongued man enough, and listened to William's tale, and talked piety, and all that, like an apostle; but he would have seen me die by the road side, I believe, ere he would have given us more than a religious tract; and there it is!"

The two young fellows took the tract and

looked at it, setting up a shout of laughter, in which the soldier now joined with great good will, never having, as he said, been so long without laughing in his life before.

“ That must be the very same sour sinister-looking boor, with the yellow eyes (I’m sure they were yellow), who stared at us so unmannerly, and licked his lips so hungrily, as he passed us at the door of the Plough inn,” said the one to the other: “ but come, Bob, we must do something for this poor woman. Can you spare a crown? If you give one, I’ll give another. We shall ne’er miss it, man. There, good woman.”—“ And there,” said the other, handing the silver. “ You see we are pretty near the bottom of our own purses: but you had better gather yourself up, and go back to the Plough at once. It’s not half a mile off; and if you only mention the name of Bob Roughride to Phemy, the landlord’s laughing daughter, she’ll do her best to make you comfortable, poor soul.”

The soldier was almost beside himself with joy at the sight of this seasonable relief, for “the twenty-fourth,” he said, “was only three days off, and then he’d have his month’s pay.” The woman with glistening eyes was now soon on her feet, and making her way to the inn.

“Is there no way we could trick that canting old rascal,” said the one of the young fellows to the other, “for his cruel insensibility to the case of this poor woman? We’d soon make up to him.”

“I’d spend a half-crown more to get him into some scrape, if we can only contrive how. What would you think of consulting the little woman herself? The sex are generally pretty shrewd at invention, and in giving hints upon ‘the proper study of mankind’: and she has a hawk’s eye;—a pretty little woman she is, faith!”

“I’ll ask her. Mistress,” said the light-hearted fellow, “tuck your little arm within mine, and I’ll help you forward a short way. Your for-

ward is my backward, but it is not the first time a pretty woman has made me go out of my way. Don't be jealous, old fellow," (to the soldier); "just unhand for a little."

"God bless your merry humour, sir!" said the woman, brightening: "but do you talk compliments to a poor woman to whom you have just given charity? You're not an Englishman, are you, sir?"

"Never mind, *madame de Mars*; your being in a sort of need does not alter the case a bit with me. Besides, is it not, after all, 'more blessed to give than to receive,' as the good book says?"

"Ha, ha!" exclaimed his companion, laughing incontinently; "Bob Roughride quoting Scripture, as I shall certify! What is the world to come to!"

"Is the saying any the worse for being in Scripture, thou inveterate heathen? And mayn't the Scripture be true out of my mouth, as well as

out of that of the yellow-eyed saint just gone past, who, like the medicine of the quack, if he does little harm to men, is sure to do far less good ; and yet the monster, that hinders every one else, is himself, no doubt, in the straight road to heaven."

" To heaven !" exclaimed the soldier, as if personally insulted. " If the devil doesn't get him, there's no justice going, I know."

" Well, but, my lady Firelock, what would you advise us to do with this old chap, if we can come up with him ?" inquired Bob Roughride, addressing the woman.

" Speak low, sir, and I'll tell you my opinion," she answered ; " for I've seen more than I wanted of these sort of people ; for my father you see, sir, was a man who—he meant well, I do believe, but if he had not annoyed us children as he did, I never had been the wife of a common soldier ; although William is the most af-

fectionate creature alive, poor fellow. But I ran away with him, sir, if I must tell you the truth, from nothing but my father's constant harassment about religion, sir; and my sister did much worse, God forgive her, poor thing! I wonder what is become of her!—Oh! I haven't time to tell you many things, sir; but if you want to know the way to manage these sort of preaching people, always appear to agree with their religious opinions, and keep *giving them*, if possible, in any way, even in promises (for they have great faith); and dine them, if you can, and sup them, and feed them well; but be sure never to let them pay for any thing they get, nor ever ask any thing from them, but advice; and that they will give *liberally*. Now, sir, I can walk by myself, if you please; and there is William."

"Upon my word, *madame Soldatesque*, you deserve to follow the spontoon instead of the common

cartouch-box, for yon seem to know something. What a beast I am not to have seen all that at first ! But come along, Tom ; and so farewell, my honest soldado."

" I hope you will both be happy ! and God reward you both !" exclaimed the woman with tears, as the young fellows mounted their horses. " You have lightened my heavy heart ; and befriended me in my utmost need."

" A good time to you, and a happy christening, my sensible soldier's wife !" said Robin Roughride, almost melted. " I am anxious to come up with our friend of the pious tracts ; and if I don't play him a trick, my brains ought to be sent to the washerwoman."

The soldier and his wife marched cheerly on to the inn, while the young men, putting their horses to the gallop, set off in good spirits in hopes of making up to the Oldwood brickburner.

" That old curmudgeon must have taken flight from us ; I can see nothing of him," said one of them, reining in his horse : " but what makes you look so thoughtful, Robin ? "

" Curse the cash !" exclaimed the other, half to himself, and with much bitterness.

" What is that you say, Bob ? " inquired his friend. " Curse the cash, indeed ! the truest friend that a man can have ! "

" And the heaviest sin a man can be guilty of to be in lack of it ; but that has been said a thousand times. Didst observe that young woman we 've just parted from ? How heavy was her heart for the want of even a few shillings ! and she sitting weeping by a road side, and nature's sorrow hovering over her ; and I could spare nothing but a poor crown-piece to the dejected soul ! Curse the mammon, I say ! "

" Robin, Robin ! you 'll never be rich, as I 've often told you. And pray, what sets you on to meditate so deeply about this poor soldier's

wife? But indeed I cannot help pondering on her case myself. Didn't she say she was forced to run away with the soldier from the way her father harassed her about religion? Poor soul! I know something about that sort of thing myself."

"Hast any philosophy in thee, Tom?"

"How am I to answer thee that by the book? Let me see! There's no prompter at hand, and I haven't a line of quotation to throw at a dog just at this moment."

"Didst hear my question? Thou mouthing player's repeater, answer me out of the abundance of thy own brains, or of the 'doited lear,' as the Scotch poet very sensibly calls it, into which thou hast been duly inducted by the pedagogue *a posteriori*. Wherefore hast thou worn the quadrangular cap at Brazen Nose?"

"Philosophy, didst thou say? Did you ever hear philosophy fathered upon a poor player?"

"Speak with reverence of our honourable

profession, sirrah ! Poor player, indeed ! Wasn't William Shakspeare, our canonized saint, a poor player ? and who ever fathered sounder philosophy?"

" Well, well, Robin ; only give me time to rehearse a moment. What sort of philosophy will you have ? Shall I discourse you ancient philosophy, or newly-got-up philosophy ? Shall it be French philosophy, or Scotch philosophy, or the philosophy of popular cant and apocryphal divinity ? (Forgive me for prostituting the name of divine philosophy, which is ' musical as is Apollo's lute !') Or shall I give you the ignorant man's mixture of the whole of these, ' to make the gruel thick and slab ?'"

" Don't inflict upon me any pedantry, but moralize and resolve me a simple question. What is the reason that you will find most of these preaching saintly sort of people, like the countryman who just now offered the poor soldier the penny and the tract to comfort

his wife, so gripingly fond of money, and so hard to bleed in the smallest degree in all cases of pure appeals to the heart and the sympathies ; where sectarian peculiarities offer no fraternity of opinion to take advantage of prejudice, or where no one is by to sound the trumpet, and no newspaper to spread abroad the act of charity ? What is the reason, I say, that in cases where a man of ordinary feeling, who perhaps says little about religion, cannot avoid being affected, and giving away whatever he can spare—perhaps more—that these sort of people (I know not how to designate them), almost to a man, parry the most direct petitions of human suffering, and, with the benevolent language of the gospel at their tongue's end, are the very personification of narrow selfishness, and the coldest slaves of the mammon of unrighteousness ?”

“ Go on, Robin ; preach away ! it will make our road all the shorter. Go on, man ; thou

hast something more to get out before thou understandest thyself."

" I am speaking seriously, Tom. I say, as far as my observation goes, if you want to meet with a man who has neither manliness nor charity,—who, if not approached through the medium of his religious prejudices, and by means of a sort of sanctimonious flattery, is incapable of the commonest feelings of benevolence,—and who watches over his money, in the very view of the misery of his fellow-creatures, with the covetous jealousy of a greedy Israelite,—you will usually find him among the loud contenders for, and zealous promoters of, some sectarian shade of religion; perhaps compassing sea and land, like the old pharisees, to make one proselyte, and when he is converted he is—you know the rest."

" I know, Bob, thou art a man of gifts and graces greater than I was aware of. If I could only persuade thee to try the good cause thyself,

and to do thy little immoralities and sow thy wild oats on the sly, like othersaints, thou wouldst find it a much more profitable trade than vagabondizing through the country, for the love of Shakespeare and the sock and buskin."

" But the question, my friend ! Be serious for a moment, and give thought, and answer to my question."

" It admits of a more wordy answer, with all its necessary exceptions and explanations, than is fitted for the time and the place, friend Robin. But this much I at present condescend to. There being no name or thing by which a species of distinction and respect from the mass may so easily be obtained without pretence to either talents or virtues, nor any thing else so readily applicable to the masked purposes of vulgar self-love and ignorant self-deception, as some of the thousand things usually passing under the name of religion, there is little wonder that that sacred

subject should be somewhat run upon for such purposes. But ‘pure and undefiled religion’ has nothing to do with the contemptible follies so often assuming her name and appearance : and while there is plenty of zeal for *something* thrusting itself into your face wherever you go, of the species exhibited by the poor crazy man we are now following, religion herself is hiding her modest head in humble privacy and almost in shame, and doing her truly good deeds, and shedding her tears for the sin and suffering of humanity, almost in the view alone of Him who can see in secret.”

“ Very fairly and seriously spoken, for a thoughtless strolling dog. But we must talk religion after another manner, for we shall soon be up with the old fellow. I say, couldn’t we manage to decoy him out of his road, and bring him to Ladford fair ? If we can only cant ourselves into his confidence, and so get him there,

we shall have rare sport out of him, and trounce him well into the bargain."

" An excellent plot ! But, 'gad, Robin, how can *you* expect to talk cant with him ? You are not even dressed for your part ; and your very look has something ungodly in it, in the eyes of such as he. Even the very animal you ride has a profane cast of its eye. Put your hair in a religious shape over your brow. If I couldn't enact Mawworm better than thee, I'd never mount behind a screen."

" Hush !—Now I'll address him."

CHAPTER XV.

CREEVY'S DISASTERS.—A TOUCH OF THE MELODRAMATIC.

THE two young fellows had now come up with Creevy, and having drawn near, at a pace possibly of a more religious character than before, they soon ventured to address him. The Oldwood man received their salutations in tolerable good part; the language of the young men being now more skilfully adapted to suit his character and humour. While the whole proceeded forward, they soon became intimate; for the countryman's caution was gradually overcome by the flattery of the others, who listened with attention and seeming respect to his talk, as he observed upon the bounty of Providence in regard of the weather and the crops, and the wickedness and ingratitude

of the world, which possessed every thing that was good, except religious knowledge and piety. Creevy added, that he was particularly shocked, on that very morning, at a ruffianly soldier on the road, who with his wife was lurking about, under a pretence of poverty, but evidently with intent to purloin and rob; for although he had listened to the soldier's made-up tale (not because he believed a word of it, but because it was the duty of pious men, who were the very salt of the earth, to do good unto all men, even to the evil and the unthankful), and had offered him his best counsel and what money he could afford, the ruffian, instead of manifesting gratitude and humility, behaved in a most outrageous manner; and he (Creevy) was indebted only to the speed of his poor jade for deliverance. Indeed, many were the deliverances he had received from the particular attentions of Providence, for the whole world was, in these last days, evidently set against the righteous.

The young men gave each other a look on hearing this speech, but, pretending to join Creevy in railing against the world, they wrought themselves into his good opinion, and gained his confidence, until they led him astray at a cross-road; and forward they all proceeded many miles in the new track, which had been familiar to the youths long before the present journey. The man of Oldwood, however, was so delighted with the delivery of his own religious notions, and his seemingly pleased auditors, that he never discovered his error until the strange and even wild appearance of the country into which they had wandered, and the uneasiness of hunger as the day advanced, roused him to something like alarm and terror, as he listened to the echo of the horses' feet in the wood, into which they now began to immerge, and as he occasionally looked round him in vain for some other human face, or some habitation where he might rest and feed, and inquire his way.

The undefined suspicions and terrors of ignorance increased, as he now and then looked stealthily into the faces of his companions, and thought he perceived a smile, not of the humble disciple of the doctrines he had been holding forth to them, but of a sort of superiority over himself, very inconsistent with their apparent approbation of his opinions, and more like the semi-serious *humbug* with which the mind possessing knowledge and accomplishment is apt to treat those with which it disdains to argue. In truth, Robin Roughride and his friend had rather overacted their parts in agreeing with the opinions of the brick-maker, which drew out his suspicions the more as he began to inquire anxiously where they were, and perceived, as he thought, from their mysterious answers and side looks, that they had led him astray into a lonesome road, where he was completely in their power, and where, if they chose to maltreat him, they might do so with impunity.

His fears increased every moment as he looked in silent suspicion down the vistas which opened irregularly here and there on their route; for the cross road on which they travelled lay through part of one of those large forests which some of the old English families still preserve in their original wildness, and not the least trace was to be seen of mansion or cottage, to relieve the echoing solitude.

The party now moved on in silence, the farmer being almost unable to speak from terror, while the talk of the youths was restrained from the impression made by the dark and almost sublime loneliness of the scene. At length Creevy's horse began, from fatigue and exhaustion, to stumble continually, and would not obey the spur, while the road seemed to narrow almost into a pathway, and the wood became more tangled, scattering, and irregular. The youths now made to turn off by an elbow of the track which led to a more open spot; but as Creevy,

with breathless suspicion, looked anxiously out, it appeared to descend in the distance, winding down into a sort of dell, where it crossed a stream, which he heard bubbling in the hollow, and was again lost in the thick of the wood.

“ For God’s sake, gentlemen, where are you leading me ?” exclaimed Creevy ; his imagination filled with images of robbery and murder, and of graves dug for the butchered wretch in the dark hollow of the forest.

“ We are not leading you at all, my honest friend,” said Robin Roughride ; “ we are going to the town of Ladford, and this cross road is the shortest way. If you are not going to the same place, you never told us so.”

“ But is there no danger in this frightful wood ? I don’t like such dismal, intricate roads ; —and it seems to me——”

“ I HOPE there is no danger, friend, in the light of day—although, to be sure, I have heard

of such things. We are *three*. Can't you fight, honest man, if we should be attacked?"

" I am no—no fighter, gentlemen. In short, I don't—I can't understand the meaning of this. For Heaven's sake, tell me where I am, and if we are near any place where we can be protected and get refreshment, for I am ready to drop!"

" Hilloa ! listen ! We must have gone astray ourselves.—A d——d ugly place this!—Hark ! Didn't you see that fellow? He seems to be playing bo-peep with us among the trees."

" I heard some one, certainly," said the other. " Pshaw ! he 's only some wood-ranger—some Robin Hood of the forest!"

" I 'll not go a foot farther. Who can it be ? I 'm ready to faint, gentlemen ;" and poor Creevy might have been knocked down with a straw.

" Cheer up, my friend ! What has become of all your pious confidence? Or why did you not the rather revive the infirmities of the flesh at the Plough inn, as we did? If you should be

called upon by Providence this afternoon to show fight, I hope you will gird up your loins in a christianly manner."

"I cannot fight after the manner of men, gentlemen!" said Creevy, with agony. "But I hope there may be no occasion. You never heard of any particular occurrence in this wood, did you?"

"I never heard of any thing *very particular*, as you say, friend,—but come along,—excepting that last year some good-for-nothing pedler, or so, was robbed and murdered; but it was not just on this spot. They buried him somewhere in the hollow there below, near the stream that brawls at the bottom of the dell."

"Oh, dear God!"

"But one of the robbers was taken, lurking about, and hanged for it; which was all as it should be."

"All as it should be!" repeated Creevy, with horror; for he distinctly observed a figure ap-

pearing occasionally, which moved to the right among the trees, and seemed to him to be striving to conceal itself, as it dogged the travellers.

They all stopped for a minute or two.

"Hadn't I better draw off to the right, and reconnoitre that fellow?" said Roughride.

"Methinks it were best that we stick together, if there is any clouting of heads," replied his companion.

"Gentlemen," exclaimed Creevy, imploringly, "as it was only my zeal for the good cause, and to lay before you the hidden meaning of the word, for your everlasting benefit, that made me so far lose sight of earthly things as to deviate out of my road, while engaged with higher objects, I hope you will now protect me through this howling wilderness—this forest of darkness and blackness—this valley of the region and shadow of death—and bring me in safety to some city of habitation, and my prayers shall——"

"Don't trouble yourself praying just now,

friend. I never heard of prayers warding off heavy blows. Mind your skull, friend ; for," (continued Tom, his companion Roughride having threaded himself into the thicket while Creevy was speechifying), "if I don't mistake the signs that my neighbour is making from behind the sloe thorns, we may have something else to do than pray presently."

"The Lord have mercy on us!"

"Amen ! (a useless old rascal, to trouble Providence with himself and his cowardice. I hope he'll get his head broke !)"

After the lapse of a few minutes, Roughride rushed past at a short distance from behind a thicket, and pointing down into the hollow, and merely saying in a low tone, "Run ! save yourselves !" he dashed into the dell, splashed across the stream, and was in a few seconds lost in the lower part of the wood.

His friend immediately clapped spurs to his horse ; and, turning round to the Oldwood

man, only said, with a grin, “ Now, old fellow, you must either ride or fight !” He galloped down the bank over the stream, and into the wood, in the direction of his friend, which Creevy tried also to do ; but his horsemanship never having been great, his presence of mind having left him through excessive fear, and his old beast being entirely jaded, in attempting to urge her down into the dell, she stumbled, fell, and rolled helplessly over, leaving him sprawling among the brushwood, in perfect horror at the thoughts of instant robbery and death.

Having muttered something between a prayer and a deprecation as he lay, all seemed still, excepting the hard breathing of his horse, and he was beginning to look up, when he was startled by a low whistle, which seemed almost at his ear ; and presently a fierce-looking, bulky fellow on foot, clad in a long velveteen surtout, studded with large pearl buttons, and a huge black hairy cap on his head, strode confidently down the

bank, and, brandishing a heavy stick which he held by the middle, demanded roughly of the prostrate Oldwood man, what he was, and what money he had upon his person.

After a gasp or two of despair, Creevy sat half up, and, looking unspeakable things at the fearful fellow, at length was enabled to say with something like calmness, as he sat awkwardly on his hams, that he was nothing but a poor brick-maker out of Oldwood ; that it was the power of the word and the importance of the souls of men that had drawn him from home ; and that, in short, it was zeal for the spiritual good of two sinful young gentlemen, whom Providence had thrown in his way, that had decoyed him into this frightful wood.

The man did not hurry him with his tale, but merely drew up his great black brows, and put himself in a position with his heavy stick uplifted on high, which made the trembling Oldwood man exclaim hastily, that if he would be con-

tented with what money he had about him, and spare his life, which he trusted might yet be made a great blessing to the souls of many, he, Creevy, would cheerfully deliver up whatever he had ; “ But, oh ! murderous man ! ” (he went on, lifting up his voice), “ if you take away *my* life, think what will be your portion ! ”

To this affecting appeal, however, he received no other answer than a laugh, so incontinently loud, that it echoed through the wood, and rang in the ears of the horrified man, as if the spirits of murder and solitude answered each other from the bosom of the forest. At length, drawing up his great brows, and grinning in scorn, the robber said to the speechless man of Oldwood :

“ Tha loife ! tha canting son o’ a sinner ! It would be a doing o’ good to take the worthless loife o’ thee afore tha makes any more so crazy as thaself. Get up ! Get on tha legs ! ”

“ There is my money, honest man ; there it is ! ”

"Tha has more than that ; tirl it out, man!"

"N—no, friend, no more!"

"Art not affear'd to tell us a lie afore tha'st murdered?"

"Then, you *are* going to murder me! Oh ! think of your latter end, and—"

"The latter end o' the hangman's halter, eh ? Tha'rt deucedly more ready wi' tha preaching than tha blunt, maister Godliness ; out wi' it, I say, every groat!"

"Now—there—friend," said Creevy, offering his pocket-book, with a look of extreme misery at the thought of parting with his money ; "I have not a copper more. And will you take it all, honest friend?"

"Don't friend me, sirrah ! I 'm no friend o' the loiks o' thee. Follow me instantly into the wood."

"I cannot go ; I will not go into the wood, as thy soul liveth."

"Wilt tha not, faith ! I 'll teach thee !" and

he twirled his stick over his own great hairy cap.

“ Will nothing but my life satisfy you ? Ah, murderous man ! how can you peril your soul for such dross as this ! ”

“ If it beeze such dross, whoi didn’t tha give some on’t to the poor soldier on the road, tha preaching scoundrel ? Come along into the wood, sirrah, and be murdered, as tha deserves.”

“ There is the money, friend. Take it, won’t you ? ”

“ Come along, I say, sirrah ! ”

“ There is all my money ; every shilling, honest friend. Take it, do ! ”

While the strange man thus threatened and flourished his stick, as Creevy stood holding out the money in one hand, with the other held in an attitude of prayer, as well as for defence, a trampling was heard among the trees below, and out darted Roughride ; who, splashing through

the shallow stream, instantly rode to Creevy's relief; and calling out something with an oath, the murderous man in the velveteen dress gave a sort of grin, scampered up the bank, and was instantly lost in the thicket above, to the great joy of Creevy; who, however, could not afford time to thank his deliverer until he had carefully and cunningly disposed of his money in the different conveniences of his apparel.

Having put up his money safely, and given another suspicious glance round him, he mounted his tired horse, that was quietly taking a mouthful of grass, with more alacrity than could have been expected, and jolted down the bank, crossed the brook, and getting more valiant as the danger seemed to have vanished, followed his conductor boldly along the narrow path through the wood.

"Praised be to the Lord! Heaven's mercies are great! The Lord is ever mindful of his own. And my money safe, every penny; like the

three faithful children, Shadrach, Mesech, and Abed—Abed—— (I forget). Not a hair of my head singed in this terrible conflict ! I can compare it to nothing but Christian and Apollyon combating at the foot of the hill of Difficulty, in the trying valley of Humiliation."

" I cannot compare it to that business at all, my friend," rejoined Roughride ; " for if I recollect the pleasant story which old Bunyan saw in his dream, Mr. Christian gave Mr. Apollyon a terrible gash about the abdomen ; but you seemed to offer no blow whatever to this murderous fellow."

" My hand, sir, was restrained from a higher power, as was also the hand of the mighty man in the wood, from shedding innocent blood. Did you ever see any thing that could show more evidently that the hand of Providence was over me ? forasmuch as I offered the man the good money several times, and the Lord restrained his hand

from taking it, and even from touching a hair of my head, although his weapon was brandished over me like Abraham's when he——”

“ How dare you compare——I mean, friend, I agree that Providence must have been very attentive to you. But wasn't it odd that the man in the velveteen and pearl buttons refused your money when it was offered him ; and never so much as smote you for your deserts, when he had such an opportunity ?”

“ Men like you, my young friend, never see the hand of Providence in any thing, although it is evident to his own people as is the nose on your face. Yes, yes ! oh, yes ! I see it clearly ;” and he went on half to himself muttering his self-gratulations, and quoting the sayings of the rev. Mr. Allmouth, until, in the height of his self-love, it found vent in poetry, and he applied to his own paltry adventure the quaint version of Sternhold and Hopkins : *which I do not*

“ The Lord preserves all, more and less,
Who bear to him a loving heart ;
But workers all of wickedness
Destroy will he, and clean subvert.”

“ But don’t you think, my young friend,” he continued gaily, and interrupting his own meditations, “ that that desperate man will be hanged yet?”

“ I cannot exactly promise you so much, however he may deserve it”—(“ for not beating you soundly, you self-sufficient old rascal,” concluded Roughride to himself.) “ But don’t you see any thing now, friend? Lift up your eyes and behold !”

“ A dainty public house, as I shall declare !” exclaimed Creevy, with joy, “ and just at hand ; and the chimney smoking so gracefully among the trees. Huph ! what a pleasant smell ! Yes, yes, it is just as I was saying ; the Lord spreads a table for his people in the wilderness.”

"I tell you what, friend"—“D—n the old rascal ! I shall never be able to keep my hands off him,” continued Roughride to himself : “ I thought us ungodly sort of people had all the profanity to ourselves. I shall positively get zealous myself, and knock this canting scoundrel down, for my own religion’s sake.”

Creevy was, however, too much occupied with joy at the sight of the dainty public house to attend to the private thoughts of Mr. Roughride. Anticipations of dinner, and agreeable visions of beefsteaks, fat hams, pots of ale, and other carnal ruminations, with which we are all, alas ! occasionally troubled, engrossed the pious man wholly. He perceived that the inn, which they were just approaching from the wood in its rear, stood pleasantly by the side of a public road, from which himself and the other travellers must all this while have been but a short distance.

When the travellers entered the inn, they

found Tom Trevor, their former companion, in the passage, busying himself, between the parlour and the bar, in consulting the jolly landlady about dinner; and as they passed one of the inner doors, Creevy even fancied he saw a flash of the velveteen coat and mother-of-pearl buttons of the frightful robber of the wood. The appearance of dinner, however, which was soon set before them, dispelled any unpleasant thoughts; and whatever justice the young men were disposed to do it, they were exceeded by Mr. Creevy, whose recent fright in the wood seemed, instead of taking away, to have increased, his appetite. But the youths were not quite aware, that their Oldwood friend made as ample a meal as nature would bear, *upon principle*, namely, a principle of *justice* (to himself); according to the plan of the Scotch Highlander with the barber, who, knowing that the reaping of his chin would cost him a penny, licked plen-

tifully of the “white stuff” (soap), as the artist of the brush laid it on, in order that he might have sufficient value for his money.

When the young fellows began to suspect this motive, and that the same salutary *principle* would lay a restraint upon his carnal inclinations in regard to the drink, they determined to take out the spigot for him in this respect, for their own amusement ; and as his good humour arose with the filling of certain vacuums, like a certain beautiful instrument of music in the north, which begins to squeak when it gets much distended in its peculiarly elegant receptacle, Creevy began to get merry, and offered, in gratitude for Mr. Roughride’s seasonable interference on his behalf in the wood, to clear up one or two points of religion which were very ill understood by a careless world. The young men could not receive these favours without some sort of return, and begged of him to enjoy himself, on the present

opportunity of talking on these subjects, with whatever liquors to his taste the house afforded, *at their entire expense.*

This was an offer not to be trifled with.

The conversation was animated, and the brandy-punch was not scanty. The young men listened, as Creevy said, like little children, while he spoke with authority, and almost like an angel.

Many things were no doubt said that ought to have been recorded and printed, if the world could only be made sensible of their value. In the meantime, the excitement was going on, as the drink was swallowed; and all excitements, say the poets, are pretty near neighbours, and may be promoted by brandy. “Let us draw a veil” (as we ought) over the slips of religious men, particularly those who are active in the good cause: “men are but men.” In short, good drink, and good company (not a penny being to pay), and edifying conversation, and

agreement with one's religious opinions, and near prospects of making converts to the faith, might overcome any of us weak mortals ; and so Thomas Creevy, honest man, at length got himself, to speak very plainly, abominably drunk !

Where Mr. Roughride and his friend thought fit to dispose of him, while in a state of insensibility, will appear in the sequel. Meantime the reader will have perceived that these youths were at present nothing but what the law calls vagabonds, that is, play-actors, who were on their way to a fair, at a place called Ladford, now but a few miles distant, where they were to join their company, which was intended to enact plays during the fair, and for a month after, for the gratification and instruction of the lovers of those things in this part of the country. The youths however, we must in justice say, had been reared in a manner which could hardly have been supposed from their present line of life. One, indeed, was the son of an eminent actor, but had

studied for the law ; and the other's father was a most respectable clergyman, who, like many other well-meaning men, having reared the youth with a degree of religious strictness, inconsistent with his years and his spirit, he broke loose, and ran into greater follies than he would otherwise have dreamt of ; and having received a sort of religious disgust, was now rambling the country along with Roughride, now both sowing the wild oats of youth, and acquiring experience of the world in a school very dangerous to their principles, and unsuitable to their respective prospects in life.

After sleeping the same night at the inn on the margin of the wood, they proceeded early in the morning by themselves towards Ladford ; but sad and serious, as we shall see, was the fate of the unlucky missionary of Oldwood.

CHAPTER XVI.

A SHORT CHAPTER, BUT FEARFULLY INTEREST-
ING.

CREEVY was awakened from the dead sleep which followed his over-indulgence in the delicious libations of the previous evening, by a continuous rumbling noise, the cause of which he could not at once guess, mixed occasionally with a sort of hooting sound, and a groaning, and pattering, and trampling of something very near him, which sounded horrible in his disturbed ears; and while he ruminated half asleep, as he began to collect his senses, and felt, from the rumbling noise and motion, that he was in some moving vehicle, or apartment, he feared to open his eyes to look upon the horrors with which, from the incessant and strange sounds, he conceived himself to be surrounded.

The swimming brain and nauseating sensations usually following drunkenness, with the returning consciousness of last night's folly; the uncertainty where he now was, together with the fearful noises with which his ears were startled and shocked, and the uneasiness, from the hard boards on which he found himself lying, increased every moment the dreadful horror of his feelings, as the anxieties of terror progressively awakened and concentrated his scattered senses. He was evidently surrounded by beings of some horrible sort, as the superhuman noises near him sensibly testified; but whether they were demons, spiritual or earthly, he almost feared to know. Some creature, almost at his ear, was continually talking in a sort of hoarse and unearthly whisper, but he could not make out any thing like words than "chee, chee, chick, chick, choack, choack," mixed with other sounds no less unintelligible. Heavy soft feet, bumping on the floor, were distinctly heard very near, with an occasional noise

like the falling of a heavy body ; the rattling of chains and the dragging of iron rings were quite audible, and rung horribly in his ears ; and a flapping of something like wings mingled constantly with this assemblage of dreadful sounds, and he felt the wind of them whisking now and then past his face, as he lay on his back in the extremity of horror.

He ventured to open his eyes a little—the place was nearly dark, a dim light only coming in by two small spots above ; he saw distinctly, amid the darkness below, two large burning eyes of some creature glaring on him like lamps of flame, and, as he turned away unable to look, his eyes encountered the crouching figure and brutal face of the croaking whispering creature, which, with its elongated head thrust almost into his face, and the dim light striking full upon its horrible countenance, gnashed out its “chee, chee, choack, choack, choack,” as if about to grapple at Creevy’s throat, while its fangs were

shot out like those of a hyena; and its grin appeared the laugh of a fiend.

The horrors of the wood were nothing to this. Was he in a dream? Was he delivered over to death and Hades? Was he in the body or out of the body? The terrors of death and the grave compassed him round about, and those unspeakable shapes that are said to haunt the bottomless abyss seemed to surround him, ready to devour. As he ruminated with his eyes half open, he saw evidently a large monstrous shape of a grayish-white rising slowly up between him and the dim light, until its huge figure seemed nearly over him, when, shaking its shaggy body for an instant, it opened its monstrous jaws as if to swallow him; its fangs seemed to approach nearer and nearer; he waited in horror for its pounce or its death-hug; he screamed with terror, when instantly the monster dropped down as if without life, a chain clanked with its fall upon the timbers of the place, and it seemed resolved or

crouched into a shapeless mass, in the dark part of this den of horrors.

But he was not in a dream ; for although unable to speak, from terror, his natural instinct led him to feel for his money, which was all safe in the different crevices of his apparel, where he had hid it when in the wood ; and the aching of his bones plainly indicated that he was "in the body," and suffering horribly for his iniquities.

As he lay petrified with his terrors, he thought he heard voices on the other side of the division of the moving apartment in which he found himself lying. A human voice was a great relief, but what he heard tended only to increase his terror. He listened painfully, and at length made out a man, in a grumbling sort of laughing tone, to say,

" Hoi, hoi ! ho, ho ! I wonder if he beez aloive yet ? If he bee'nt eaten up, he moight, hoi, hoi ! I 've done for um."

The terrified Creevy could not hear what the other voice said to this, and the first rejoined,

"Never moind, goody, I've fixed um. Coom, and we'll look for his pious bones. Didst ever see Daniel in the den o' the loions, eh? hoi, hoi!"

A small panel was now shot open in the upper part of the sort of apartment, and a man's head was thrust into the opening, who grinning a moment as he looked down, then shouted out "Hoi oi, old Preachum! art aloive, mon?"

Creevy looked up, and at once recognised the voice and hairy cap of the robber of the wood.

"I say, old fellow," continued the man, "whether wouldst be in the loion's den or the whale's belly? How dost loik Jemmy the ourang there, and ould Grizzy the gray bear, eh, mister Jonah the prophet?"

Creevy was really rejoiced to recognise his old acquaintance, the murderous man, and thought he saw a friend in trouble, even in him, rather than

the wild beasts with which he was actually surrounded, and in the near neighbourhood of which he had passed the night. The reader need not now be told, perhaps, that the robber of the wood was no other than an honest lump of a showman, whom Roughride and his friend perceiving from the wood, as he proceeded on the road to Ladford fair, the former went aside, under a pretence of reconnoitring, and easily induced him, by telling the story of the poor soldier, to follow him into the dell, for the purpose of terrifying the unfortunate enthusiast of Oldwood.

In the evening also, when Creevy had helped himself so plentifully to the brandy, because he got it at the cost of another, Roughride went out, perceiving where the religious excitement would end, and finding the caravans with the menagerie standing temptingly at the door of the inn, the thought struck him to get Creevy placed safely among the wild beasts, if the drink

took proper effect. He soon found the showman, regaling himself in the kitchen ; and, sounding him on the subject, the latter jumped at the proposal ; for, having considered himself to have been ill-used and harassed frequently of late, by persons with a religious name, who, pretending to have strong impressions of the demoralizing effects of fairs and country merry-makings, had busied themselves and stirred up the authorities against him and his brother showmen, to whom permission to exhibit their wonders to the multitude was frequently refused. Some of these harmless itinerants had even been sent to prison and the stocks ; and were hunted out of profitable quarters, from regard to the souls of the people, and to the great disappointment and dismay of all the servant maids and gallant youths of the place. These persecutions coming to the showman's recollection, he gladly entered into Roughride's scheme, by way of retaliating upon one of the

sort, who, for aught he knew, would yet be a forward enemy to his calling. He accordingly undertook to give him such quarters among his wild beasts as, without inflicting on him personal injury, would make him remember the adventure the longest day of his life.

Having properly secured his unruly charge, during the time that Creevy was hotly engaged discussing religion and the brandy punch, they all waited patiently until he was finally overcome, and then carried him neck and heels and laid him into a barred space, among "the wonders of nature." The den was only lighted by two small panes of horn placed in the roof; a large Greenland bear was turning and clanking at one side; a couple of vultures hooting and whisking their wings at the other, and a large baboon grinning and chattering, at less than arm's length, just over him. By this time sleep and terror had thoroughly sobered him, and he tried to speak.

"Oh, dear sir! honest friend!" said he,

in deep trouble, "where am I? What dreadful place of owls and bats is this? Will you take me away from these wild haunts? Oh! deliver me, and God will reward you."

"May be he may, an' may be he mayn't, mister Methodist. But wilt tha reward me tha-self. Ise make thee bleed sommat, for I knows tha loiks the brass, ould Grudgem."

"Chick, chick, choack, choack, chee, chee," squeaked the ourang outang, making a pluck at the Oldwood man's hat, as he rose up.

"Oh, for Heaven's sake, friend, let me out! I will give you any thing. But must you have money, honest friend?"

"Don't ax me ony questions about it, or tha may just stay wi' ould Grizzy till I bring thee to the fair; an' if I doesn't make a woild beast o' thee at Ladford, dang me, stingy ould baboon!"

"How much shall I give you, friend? How much? how much?"

"Five pounds, to be gi'en to the poor soldier

in charity; not a farthing less! Dost think I'll gi'e thee drunken quarters for nou't, an' carry thee wi' the other brutes fifteen miles besides? An' didn't maister Roughride pay thy drunken shot at the Cat and Tongs behind? Wilt pay nou't at all, ould Dry-hair?"

"There is the sum, there is the good money, friend; but if I don't——"

"Oh, tha'lt law uz, wilt un? Coom here, Charley! Charley, I say!" calling to a shock-headed youth with a long whip; "I say, boy, coom and bear witness. Now, Mr. Dry-bones, I'll let thee off wi' two guineas, if tha gi'est it wi' good will, an' I'll find out the poor soldier that tha hadn't the heart to offer a shilling to, an' he shall ha't, every doit: now bear witness, boy."

The showman having received the money, and judiciously taken the lad to witness, let the terrified Creevy out; and having explained to him, with many a rude joke, the mystery of the

robbery in the wood, Creevy turned up his eyes, and thanked Heaven so fervently for his various deliverances, that he began to win the heart of the showman's wife, who was present, who being a tender-hearted body, and having withal just about as much religion as was good for her, the very sound of it was a treat to her in her wandering and regardless life ; and a comfortable breakfast being now ready in the subsidiary caravan, within which the show-folks "lived and moved," she invited Mr. Creevy to sanctify them with his company to breakfast.

Creevy never could refuse an offer of this kind. In short it was the very way to win his heart; and having done more justice to the showman's fare than most men could, the morning after a debauch, and perceiving that the woman looked upon his piety with a favourable eye, he dealt out the word to her in payment for his breakfast with such abundance, that even she found it

tiresome, and the man of beasts actually swore he could stand it no longer.

At length the Oldwood man mounted his stiff mare, that had been fastened behind the caravan, and stroking down his breast at the thoughts of his comfortable meal, and of the various turns of Providence in favour of the *really pious*, he took leave of the show-folks, and jogged on for Ladford, which was not very far from the road to his own home, where he still hoped to be useful in stemming the torrent of wickedness among the people of this perverse generation.

CHAPTER XVII.

PUBLIC MEASURES FOR THE PROMOTION OF
RELIGION; AND THE PERSONS THE WORLD
DELIGHTETH TO HONOUR.

WE now, for the reader's consolation, think proper to hasten the adventures of Mr. Creevy, as preparatory to the more important part of our history.

When he arrived at the town of Ladford, he was grieved, like many other worthy characters of our day, to look upon the joyous bustle, the crowds on the road, the dress, the flaunting, the noise, and the merry-making of the fair. Such profane doings, he observed, proved clearly by matter of fact, as Mr. Allmouth had argued, the truth of the disputed doctrine of original

sin and innate ideas of iniquity; but he was comforted by the thought that when the millennium came, which, according to the recent discovery of the reverend gentleman, was just at hand, these ungodly people, instead of going forth to the sound of the pipe and tabor, would all be going to churches and meeting-houses, where they would dwell for ever listening to the word.

As Creevy stood staring round him at the tents and booths, and the placards on the walls, and this and the other, he perceived, to his great joy, a large label, setting forth in blazing letters, among the play-bills, that a public meeting was to be held that very afternoon, in the large hall of the town, for various religious purposes, *lord Overly in the chair*. The principal intention of the meeting, however, was for forming, under his lordship's powerful auspices, a society, auxiliary to one to be immediately raised in London, and all the principal cities, to be called the *Anti-*

podean Missionary Society, for the special and instant purpose of sending out a ship-load of missionaries for the benefit of the benighted islands of *Loo Choo*, where the people were sunk in the grossest irreligion, and knew not so much as the use of bayonets or money, being strangers as yet to all the blessings of evangelical knowledge and common civilization.

Could there be any thing more seasonable or opportune for a man who had not heard a word of piety from any mouth but his own since he left home, and got out of hearing of the excellent Mr. Allmouth? And then lord Overly himself—it would be such a treat to hear him speechify; and he, great as he was, had noticed him (Creevy) most condescendingly at the great meeting at Oldwood.

As he stood at the door of an inn, solacing himself with these pleasing thoughts, a carriage and four made its appearance, with the most im-

posing splendour, a coronet, post riders, footmen and wigs, and staffs, and cocked hats : it was lord Overly himself. The carriage was delayed by the crowd, and my lord condescended to look at the people, to the right, and then to the left. At length he saw Mr. Creevy, and even looked at him as a lord looks at *a man*. Creevy pulled off his hat; my lord seemed to recognize him, and even noticed him in the most gracious manner. Was there ever a man so fortunate? “ How wonderful are the ways of Providence !” said Creevy. It was too much !

As Creevy stood longing impatiently for the hour of the meeting, he was accosted by a hum-ming and hawing man, appearing to be a country tradesman, who, in the fawning and grinning manner of his sort, or rather sect, informed him that a public meeting being that day to be held in Ladford for various pious and urgent purposes, and that pious nobleman, my lord Over-ly, having kindly *consented* to take the chair,

his lordship had, with his usual indefatigable diligence in the cause, observed him, Creevy, to be in the place, and felt it his duty to send to him. "His lordship," continued the man, "having also been pleased to recollect your name as a friend to the cause in Oldwood, where the great Mr. Allmouth is doing so much good (under God), sent me to invite you to favour them with your presence at the meeting to-day, as it becomes every man who has the spread of religion at heart, to step forward, and let his light shine in these times of wickedness and opposition to the truth."

"And did his lordship actually speak to you of me, sir?" said Creevy, perfectly elevated.

"He did, sir, within these few minutes."

"And what did his noble lordship please to say of me, my *dear* sir?"

"He said," answered the man, grinning and fawning, "that he understood you to be a worthy

pious man, and a man of substance, and a friend to the cause——and——”

“And what——and——”

“ And signified his noble pleasure to me that I should try to find you out, and request your presence, and countenance, and support at the meeting——and——”

“ Most gladly shall I go up to the house of ——His lordship is a most——in short, I am not worthy to——”

“ It never rains but it pours,” saith the proverb. Honours and flattery showered so thick upon poor Creevy, that he was perfectly beside himself: he talked religion to the man with a full heart. The man was not to be outdone in piety by this raw religionist, and he praised the Lord, and my lord Overly, and the saints in Ladford. He informed Creevy, moreover, that being a saddler by trade, his lordship had appointed him to the honour of being his harness-

maker; which post had not, to be sure, produced much fruition as yet; still great prosperity would come to him through means of it; for although his lordship made a very hard bargain, and took special care of his money, which was no more than the duty of every prudent man, yet he contrived to come at many rich *parings* by his lordship's means.

Occupied with such pleasing discourse, the time was soon got over until they had arrived at the Hall where this great meeting was to be holden.

Being aware that that portion of society who take credit to themselves more for knowledge and good sense than for popular piety are very shy of attending such meetings, although believing that many well meaning people may be found countenancing them; we trouble ourselves and them with a very brief sketch of what passed on this great day, pledging ourselves not to offer a repetition of this sort of thing hereafter.

The room was already nearly full, for it being fair-day, the people were agog for every variety of entertainment, and numbers pressed forward to get a sight of a lord, and to wonder at the piety of great people. A table and chair were placed of course at the upper end of the room, on an elevation originally constructed and still serving for a stage for certain play-actors who exhibited here; and on this stage were placed rows of forms, on which the actors in this day's exhibition had already planted themselves for the convenience of showing off, and were conning over the speeches by which they meant to challenge village praise and religious distinction. The anxious countenances, gay dresses, and stretched-out necks of the LADIES, who had come to be religious, and to delight their ears with the speeches of their husbands and brothers, so conspicuous near to the seat of his lordship, added great brilliancy to the assembly; and the prim sanctified faces (rather *low*, according to

Lavater) and straight hair of many grave men scattered among the crowd, showed evidently that the present was a meeting of a purely religious character.

The saddler knowing what was what, and how to take a hint from a great man, pushed Creevy up near the table, ready to be brought forward on the scene, when his lordship's eye should so indicate. And now that pious nobleman entered, amid the cheers of this respectable assembly, followed by a retinue of godly hangers on; a set of persons who (the truth must come out sometimes) were very indifferent whether they were called in their patron's service to be preachers or pimps, being as ready in any *office* as the Highlandman was to go and be hanged, and for the same reason, namely, "to please the laird."

The *tout ensemble* of this august meeting was at this moment most imposing. His lordship having looked triumphantly round, gave a sign, and some one climbed up to lower the tops of

the long windows for the admission of fresh air. This induced the people to look upwards, where an object was seen which had a strange effect in the eyes of an observer or two present, being considered by them as a sort of motto or frontispiece to what they expected to take place: A part of the *proscenium*, and other of the paltry decorations of the actors, profanely stood conspicuous, and in the very centre of a canvas stretching across over the heads of his lordship and friends were painted the figures of a zany, with his cap and bells, and of a harlequin, with his mask and motley coat, and acting his antics; which these observing persons noticed as a most apt coincidence, as characterizing the scene just about to be acted.

His lordship rose, and with much dignity stated the object of the meeting; painted in the most affecting language the deplorable ignorance and miserable condition of the people of Loo Choo, and hoped, that as there were so many other va-

luable societies, who were busy converting people in all other parts of the globe, the present most respectable assembly would support him in forming this present projected institution, of which he might humbly claim the merit of being the sole inventor.

A young gentleman with a fiery red head and a stiff collar, instantly rose, as concerted, and having in his own mind sanguine expectations of a good place in church or chapel, begged most respectfully to second his lordship's most praiseworthy views; showed clearly the imperious necessity that something should be done to relieve the people of Loo Choo; proposed a set of resolutions; and ended by descanting with glowing and weary eloquence upon the unspeakable piety and worth of the noble contriver of the forthcoming society. A second, a third, a fourth, a fifth, and a sixth, rose successively, and speechified, with little variation, in the same strain. One undertook to answer the objections of scoffers

and profane persons, by showing how much the Loo Choo people were in need of a cargo of pious youths, and took upon himself to assert most distinctly that the accounts of various ungodly voyagers were infamously false; these narrators, like most other men who dabbled in literature, being, as he could maintain from his own knowledge, nothing but infidels and atheists at the bottom. In confirmation of this, he read a letter from a man in one of the ships which had visited these islands (a man who, though nothing but a common sailor, was filled with piety and the spirit), which flatly contradicted almost every word of the printed accounts of the officers, and asserted that the people in Loo Choo were hungering and thirsting for the word, &c. &c.

Another man, who was of his lordship's retinue, spoke a speech, in which he censured strongly the men of this generation for their stinginess in the good cause, abused them for spending their odd money in the alehouse, in-

stead of giving it to “the Lord” for the conversion of the heathen, and scolded the ladies until they blushed, for wantonly adorning their bosoms with gold chains and precious stones, so long as there was a stone in the temple of God’s house that remained to be built up. But as there are never wanting persons in the world who will see things in righteous men which ought not to be seen, there were persons present who had the profanity to observe, that this good man (who was a broken trader, and travelling agent for several rich societies,) wore himself a great goggling brooch in the frill of his shirt, and had a bunch of gold seals hanging to his fob, each of which was almost the size of a smoothing iron.

But, to be brief, they all agreed in glorifying the good cause, and lauding the chairman and each other in the most fulsome and even impious terms. A praised B, who in return praised A, and included C, who next glorified D, and that

worthy man E, who was quite overpowered by his feelings when he thought upon the virtues and piety of the whole, and also of his incomparable friends F and G ; and so they went through the whole of the men on the elevated seats, like the “ babbling echo.” But the chorus of praise was still his lordship himself, who was the theme of universal admiration, as the greater among the lesser lights. Some most pleasant wit was sported by a young gentleman with a white hand and strongly smelling of musk, who still turned to the ladies as he spoke in the most graceful manner, and made them merry at the expense of the Loo Choo people and their describers ; the latter of whom, he said, with that perversion of mind which ever accompanies the want of spiritual light, had ignorantly praised the condition of people who had no money and little zeal about religion, and who were even destitute of weapons of warfare, either spiritual or temporal, whereby they might contend withal.

Another man, of a grave age and bearing a most religious look, said many edifying things in praise of the good work, as he showed the incalculable service his pious lordship had done for the world, as a leading man in the great society *for the conversion of the Jews*, which, it was well known, had made so many sincere converts, at so small an expense, and he rejoiced to think that that noble society having taken in hand to forward the millennium, it was just coming on (as our wise men clearly saw), and was in fact almost daily expected.

But his lordship was not, as it appeared, yet nauseated with praise; for Thomas Creevy was still in reserve—and Thomas was a character of most pleasing variety, to come on the scene at this part of the performance. Accordingly, his lordship's look to the saddler was seconded by the latter's whisper to Creevy. The man of Oldwood was modest and bashful, but an encouraging nod from the gracious chairman com-

pleted the business, and up got our missionary to make his maiden speech before the religious world. Creevy had an instinctive perception of what was expected from him, and by the time he got warmed in his speech, the whole men were envious, and the women were affected almost to tears, at the plain unvarnished *statement* and “simple eloquence” of this pious countryman, as he painted the wonderous zeal of the great nobleman who now so advantageously presided over them, displayed not only on the present occasion, but which his lordship had lately *exhibited* in his native town of Oldwood, hitherto a godless and supine place; and as he descanted upon the marvellous effects upon himself and others of the preaching of that great man whom my lord Overly had been the happy instrument of introducing; “for the people,” said Creevy, “had no rest day nor night on account of religion,” &c.

But by the time he had sat down, amidst the

greatest applause, being quite unable to proceed farther (so much was he affected with his own eloquence and the cause), a scheme was matured and ready to be brought out, which was to bring him forward, to the envy of many, and to heap new honours on his favoured head.

Near to Mr. Creevy sat two well-favoured reverend-looking men, the one a printer and the other a paper-dealer, who had for many years been close acquaintance and strict friends in the bonds of trade and the cause. The printer, being at this time very slack in the way of his business, felt his conscience strongly impelling him to make a speech and a proposal to the meeting; but fearing that it might be thought rather bare-faced if it came from himself, he put it as usual upon his particular friend, the paper-maker, who, having Creevy in his eye, after watching his opportunity, his conscience being also impressed upon the matter, spurred him on to take the speech in hand, and try the proposal.

He began by eulogizing, of course, his lordship and the worthy persons “whom he saw around him,” all assembled together for so noble a purpose. The goodness of the object that this most respectable meeting had in view was, he said, unquestionable; but while those present were rapidly converting savages abroad, it became them to give an occasional glance at the—in short, at home. Here they were in the very centre of a profane fair, where wickedness ran down the streets like a stream; and they ought to adopt measures to stem the torrent. He reminded them that a plan had been adopted in London, by the Tract or some other society, which he had no doubt had been productive of the most beneficial effects, namely, distributing small papers, or hand-bills, of religious tracts among the unruly people at Bartholomew fair, just about the time when they were at the height of their wickedness; a measure which had proved a great blessing, as he had been credibly in-

formed, to the souls of many. Now his proposal was, that a few thousands of these short tracts, sensibly selected and pithily worded, should forthwith be ordered to be printed, and should be distributed by zealous persons among the crowd at the fair, on the evening of the next night, when the crowd was greatest. A stop ought to be put to the wickedness, by calling the attention of the profane to divine truth.

It might be objected, he said, that, as had been the case in London, the pious persons who were engaged in the distribution of these bills might be kicked and cuffed for their pains, by the blackguards at the fair; but “was such a paltry consideration to deter them from doing their duty in the good cause? certainly not!” and for his part he should be happy to offer his services as one of the distributors, and begged, if this meeting should in its wisdom adopt his suggestion, to propose for the other distributor, their honest friend from Oldwood, who he was

sure would gladly put his hand to the plough in this important business.

This resolution, being highly applauded, passed, though with some slight opposition. The resolutions that had been read in favour of the Loo Choo people were all adopted with enthusiasm, office-bearers were appointed, and money was subscribed. Mr. Creevy was milked of a guinea on the occasion, and charity sermons were planned for all the churches and chapels that would aid in furtherance of this great work. The company separated in the best spirits, most of the speechifiers to a dinner, made and provided in the cause of the Antipodean Society, at which even Mr. Creevy was to have a seat, besides dining, as he was invited to do, with the paper-dealer on the following day, previous to the important labours of the fair. Meantime my lord Overly's secretary was despatched off to the county town, to have the proceedings duly set forth in the newspapers; and thus these

important transactions were got through with the utmost unanimity, and scarcely a murmur was heard of disapprobation or dissent.

There *was* murmuring, however, on an obscure seat near the door ; but the murmur was not heard, nor was ever meant to be audible. It was not loud, but deep, and deep-seated, and deeply impressed. It came, mingled with heavy sighs and sorrowful moralizing, from a thin wan-looking widow, with five children, who had many relatives and acquaintances among the foremost at the meeting. Lord Overly's friends they all were, but they were now no friends to her, or her fatherless orphans, although her deceased husband had been, as she believed, the friend and the dupe of most of them for many years ; and her acquaintance was, unfortunately, with scarcely any other sort.

She confessed to herself that she had attended the meeting simply from curiosity, or that painful feeling that leads one in misfortune to probe

into, and trace out, what mankind are capable of, and what are the excuses framed out of the human heart to evade the common calls of humanity, by selfish narrow-mindedness, vanity, and hypocrisy. Nearly two years she had struggled to maintain her fatherless charge ; her comfortable relatives could not afford to assist her. Three of her infants were to go to the workhouse next week, and that would break her heart ; but she had a curiosity to know what they, who *could not afford* a little help to the widow and children of a relative or acquaintance, could give to the antipodeans of Loo Choo, who she understood had manifested no wish to import English religion.

Her heart sank, and the tears rolled silently down her wan features, as she witnessed pounds after pounds put down, to be squandered among religious idlers and hypocrites ; and as she saw in imagination her orphan children, the fruits of the love of her youth with him who was now

beyond the reach of earthly sorrow, driven to the common workhouse, she felt a woman's shame for humanity ; and remembering in her bitterness the indignant execration of the Founder of that religion so shamelessly prostituted, exclaimed, “Wo unto the pharisees and hypocrites of this generation, who devour widows' houses, and, for a pretence, make long prayers ; who compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made he is tenfold more the child of sin than before ! It will be more tolerable for *Sodom* and *Gomorrah*, in the day of judgment, than for you !”

But who cares for the murmurs and secret sorrows of the poor widow and the fatherless children ? The world is occupied with the public religion of such as my lord Overly. Reader ! moralize, if you will—our tears are almost exhausted !

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE CONCLUSION OF MR. CREEVY'S ADVENTURES.

ON the following night, sometime after dark, Mr. Creevy and the paper-dealer sallied forth to distribute the portable tracts at the fair. The lamps were all lighted up among the tents and before the various booths, and had a most brilliant effect. The crowd was great; the bells, speaking-trumpets, and gongs, used by the showmen to draw the attention of the multitude, sounded in clanging and exciting confusion; while groups of dressed-out dancers figured on the stages before several of the *establishments*, to the sound of flute, fiddle, organ, clarionet, horn, trombone, bassoon, and all manner of deafening instruments, while harlequins whirled and tumbled, and merry-andrews grinned and

cracked their jests in the most pleasing and instructive manner. Mr. Creevy's old friend, the murderous man of the wood, was now in the midst of his glory ; his beasts all well arranged and shown within, and their pictures much better without, while he strutted backward and forward, in front, in his great fur cap and a new white top-coat, the very prince of showmen and emperor of wild animals.

Creevy and the tradesman, having in the course of the afternoon got very intimate over an argument upon the perseverance of the saints, which required the occasional support of repeated tumblers of gin punch, by the time they came to sally out to their labours in the good cause, were both much more in a humour to participate in the profane pleasures of the fair, than to restrain others, or put the wicked to the rout by means of a charge of religious tracts. Duty, however, must be attended to, as they had now embarked in the good cause, and fleshly lusts

must be kept down. But the lights glanced in Creevy's eyes with such splendour, the trumpets, horns, and bassoons so blasted and blew, and the show of vulgar festivity was now altogether so delightful, that in fact it was quite glorious. The sound of his old friend the fiddle almost set him a capering, while the figures of the thinly dressed damsels waltzing on the stages, as they whirled round to the caressing motions of their bespangled partners, made his heart, primed as he was, bump with sensations which we shall not be particular in describing.

He was getting into the thickest of the throng, but his companion was now evidently hanging back. He unfolded his bundle of bills; his friend hesitatingly did the same. He began to offer them here and there, and so also did his friend. The people eagerly held out their hands, seeing men giving away something for nothing, no matter what. "This is a good omen," thought Creevy, "the people are thirsting for the word."

"Here is something a doing," said the rustics, anxiously looking out for fun; and hands were held out in all directions, and Creevy was jostled to and fro, and entirely lost his companion. When the people began to read the heading of the tracts, "Solemn Considerations for the Frequenters of Fairs," they set up a shout of laughter. Jeers and taunts came from all sides, while the hustling and driving every moment increased, and the worst characters at the fair came from all quarters to help forward the fun and get up a riot.

Creevy was not now in the same case, however, as lately in the wood; for, partly from the effects of the paper-man's drink, and partly from his own *legitimate* love for a spree, he continued to maintain his part as the hero of the riot and centre of the crowd, distributing his tracts with desperate courage for a considerable time, and exclaiming against and elbowing off the people for their *ungentlemanly* behaviour, until the gibes and taunts took almost an angry turn. One asked

him if he was not a member of the Vice Society ; another called him an old canting rascal, who had invented this as an improved method of pocket-picking ; and a third swore, that he was employed by the magistrates for the purpose of kicking up a row, and spoiling and disgracing the fair. But some took his part, for the purpose of increasing the fun ; some knocked his hat over his eyes from behind ; while most, tearing the tracts, and thrusting them into their mouths, and then rolling them up when wet, began to throw them in his face and at one another, until various excellent quarrels were raised, which were soon maintained with suitable spirit.

Sticks and fists were now every where at work ; hard hits were dealt to the unfortunate Creevy, and all around ; and a general battle and riot took place, which put to flight all the women and timid persons, and shook the fair to its very centre. The blackguards had several fights at once, during which they contrived to cuff and kick Creevy without reason or mercy ; while he, having thrown

the tracts from him, laid about him with unexpected valour, amidst shouts of laughter and encouragement from the crowd, which rent the air, and frightened the very wild beasts in their dens. The whole area round was in a terrible uproar—broken heads and bloody faces, and torn clothes, bedaubed with mud, were every where seen by the surrounding showmen, who, suspending their labours, looked down from their elevation upon the spree with the highest gratification.

But Creevy was now in sore distress, and being nearly exhausted, was neither able to “carry on the war” nor get out of the crowd. One eye was completely closed in *blackness* by an uncouth blow from a butcher; the blood that descended from a clour on his head almost blinded the other; and in the fury of the fray the tails of his coat were completely torn off, containing his pocket-book and nearly all his money. He was by this time—to speak in the language of many lords and black-legs—quite “groggy,” and every one

who chose had a pluck or a hit at him. In vain did he look round for his friend the paper-dealer. That prudent man, never intending in his own person to take any decided part in the good work, had thrown the tracts among the crowd, and slunk off as soon as Creevy was fairly engaged, and before the fray began ; and the poor brick-burner was now in sore extremity.

The riot extended to several brawls around him. One man was thrashing Creevy, regardless of his shouts for quarter. A great fellow, in a white top-coat, and flourishing a heavy staff, was seen to push fearlessly in among the combatants, cutting his way to the right and left, until at length laying hold of Creevy by the remains of his coat, and shouting to the people, “ Hoi, hoi, lads ! wo ’t kill the mon, surely ? Let um go, or I ’ll break the first mon’s skull wi’ this here pot-stick.” He pulled the Oldwood man in triumph out of the crowd ; and dragging him, not in the most gentle manner, past the booths, had him

landed in the first public house they could meet.

“ What ! hoi ! eh ! is it thee, mon?—Jonah the prophet, by gum !—Ha, ha, ha ! hoi, hoi, hoi !” shouted the honest showman, thrusting his head and hairy cap almost into Creevy’s face ; for it was no other than his old friend, the murderous man, who, seeing some person in the fair getting the worst of it in the riot, had, with true English feeling, descended from his elevation to assist the weakest.

“ Ay, ay, honest friend !” said Creevy, thrusting out one hand to the showman, and wiping the blood from his face with the other. “ Indeed, friend, you have saved me out of the hands of the Ishmaelites, and Amalekites, and Jebusites, and Hittites.”

“ Hoi, hoi ! Hit-ites, indeed ! and to some purpose, too, friend Preachum ! Ho, ho, ho ! This is worse, I thinks, than the den of loions, and old Grizzy, the bear, after all.”

Creevy was helped to his inn, and passed the night in great dolour and despondency, particularly at the loss of his money and the despoiling of his apparel, although he tried to comfort himself with the thought, that, having met with these misfortunes in the course of his exertions in the good cause, the righteous men of the town, to whom he had now the good fortune to be known, would soon make up the loss; particularly would his lordship, as that great man seemed to have a special desire to honour him by appointing him to this post of danger in the blessed work.

Accordingly, in the morning he called for pen and paper, and sent to his lordship a particular account of his disaster, with a humble request that the loss he had sustained might be made up *out of the money collected at the meeting.* The messenger, however, brought back the letter, stating that his lordship had gone to attend another meeting for the same benevolent purpose

as the former, to be held about forty miles off. He next sent the same account to the paper-man, requesting to see him immediately; but that prudent person, suspecting that something would be asked from him, excused himself (in terms of great civility and regret) from seeing the man in affliction, pretending very particular engagement in business.

He next, with some apprehension, sent for the pious saddler, without giving any particulars. But when the man of tanned leather heard Creevy's piteous tale and his request, and saw his broken and battered face, he only smiled and sneered in the most knowing manner; advising him, if he had the least prudence or understanding of what was what, not to attempt to ask any thing from any of the friends of the cause in Lafford, for they would give him nothing but blame for his rashness, and express astonishment at his imprudence in taking money into a crowd.

This was a speech which conveyed the same sort of comfort to Creevy as did that of Bildad, the Shuhite, to Job, the Uzzite, in days of old, and was received with as little relish. But Creevy must have money to pay his way at the inn, as well as to get a coat with tails to it, and made a direct proposal to the man for the loan of a few pounds until he should reach Oldwood. The saddler, however, was quite prepared for this, and, gathering up his features as a man will do upon such occasions, made answer, that that was a thing *impossible*. But Creevy, being hard pushed, and reminding him of his boasting only the day before of the ready cash he had, the man, finding a white lie would not do, said, that he might advance him a few pounds for a short time, but only upon getting *good and approved security* for the repayment. This proposition and stern alternative filled Mr. Creevy with perfect indignation, and seemed to open his eyes; although he ought to have known that it pro-

ceeded from the spirit that clung to them all, and of which he himself largely partook: but this latter part of the case he did not see, and, informing the saddler that he had no means of giving him security in a place where he was a stranger, the two pious men parted with much less cordiality than they had me a few days before.

As he sat ruminating upon his present distress, the unchristian spirit of the religious brethren at Ladford, and the disastrous termination of all his labours in the cause, he observed, from the window of the inn, the face of a person whom he knew, and whom he soon recognized to be no other than the slouch-hatted gentleman whom he had first seen in the inn at Donchester, and who had haunted him visibly and in thought ever since, without his being able to get speech of him. Creevy instantly sent for the landlord, and, despatching him after the stranger, begged, through the inn-keeper, that the gentleman would step in, and grant him a few minutes' conversation.

When the stranger, who was a man of rather gentlemanly exterior, entered, and found himself sent for and addressed by a countryman with a bruised face and a black eye, and the very tails rumped from his coat, he hesitated, and demanded haughtily of Creevy what it was he wanted with him.

Our Oldwood friend answered with all meekness and humility, reminding the gentleman of having met him one Saturday night at an inn in Donchester, where there had been much conversation upon religion, and added, that having since suffered many afflictions for the cause, he had just taken the liberty of seeking a word of communing with him, being convinced that he (the stranger) was a lover of the truth.

The gentleman smiled, and marvelled for a moment, but begged Creevy to proceed, which the latter did in his choicest words; but when he got to the story of the meeting, his being deputed to distribute the tracts, and his reception

at the fair; while he verified his statement by pointing to his blackened eye and his bruises; and ended by complaining bitterly of the scurvy treatment of his religious friends after all his perils; the gentleman could not help laughing outright; and he walked up and down the apartment stamping with his laughter, as enjoying in the highest degree the particulars of the tale.

“ How can you expect any thing else, friend? ” said Mr. Provan, when he had settled his features—for this was the name of the stranger with the broad hat. “ You have been in the service of Satan, and you have only got Satan’s reward.”

“ Of Satan, sir? ” replied Creevy, with astonishment.

“ Certainly, of Satan! The religion—call it what you choose—of these people is but the religion of the world; and the arch-fiend never invented a surer means of deceiving men to certain damnation, than by giving something under

the name of religion as a cover for their own lusts; and which, while they are gratifying the meanest and most despicable passions, enables them to do so, under the impious persuasion that they are doing God service; and this, my friend, you will find to be the religion of the world."

Creevy was greatly startled at this doctrine; but it came at a moment when he was just prepared for it.

Mr. Provan soon drew from Creevy a confession of his faith, in which he (the stranger) said there were many gross errors; told him that, with all his spiritual conceit, he had as yet to learn "the truth;" and as for his zeal and good works, he was not serving God at all, but actually serving the devil. And when Creevy, in self-defence, quoted and argued, and threw Mr. Allmouth in the stranger's teeth, the other scornfully answered, that the church herself, to which even this Allmouth was not true, was but a worldly church, never contemplated in the New Testament; and

as for his reverend favourite, who mouthed so much, he had no more knowledge of true religion than Mahomet.

Here was a shake to poor Creevy's faith! In vain did he reason and quote Scripture: every word he said was instantly demolished by the polemical stranger. While he quoted one text, Mr. Provan nailed him with three or four. There was no resisting the superior logic of this gentleman with the hat. The very contempt with which he treated Creevy's opinions was most imposing. The poor Oldwood man began to be convinced that he was not only ignorant, but had been spending his strength for nought, or much worse; and before they rose, the whole fabric of his religion (Mr. Allmouth and all) tumbled about his ears.

But in the midst of these divine subjects, carnal things would intrude; and what was Creevy to do with a coat which had no tail, and pockets without a groat therein? These melancholy con-

siderations he laid before Mr. Provan with much feeling: but the latter only replied with a sneer, that he might just apply to the religious world again; for as the world loved its own, it would, no doubt, manifest its regard to him, if he would only make application to it in that way and manner which, with the religious world, had been always known to be successful. As for money, the stranger said that *he* had lost, or rather had himself been bamboozled out of, whatever he possessed by that very religious world; and as for giving Creevy a coat—although he was perfectly convinced, since he came to understand Scripture, that it was the duty of every christian brother, who had more than one, to give the overplus to him that had none—this service he was, in fact, unable to do—a plurality of coats having been beyond his means for several years.

Creevy was more and more pleased with the strange opinions and confident sayings of this peculiar man; and now, becoming clearly con-

vinced that, with all the to-do that had been made in Oldwood by this Mr. Allmouth, the place was now in a worse state than before that celebrated preacher took it in hand, he warmly invited Mr. Provan to visit that benighted corner of the vineyard, that the poor deluded people might yet be put in the right way ; and so they parted.

But the empty pockets and tailless coat still interrupted Creevy's pious cogitations; and as he sat musing at the window of the inn, he observed his old acquaintances, Roughride and Tom Trevor, swaggering past, with all the gentility of dandies rusticating, to the instruction of the ambitious villagers, and for the regulation of the fashions at Ladford. He instantly despatched his landlord to entreat their presence; and when they made their appearance, and heard his story, while his disfigured features added volumes of ludicrous pathos to his melancholy tale, no bounds could be set to their merriment; and they declared, that if any man could be found of suf-

ficient talent to set forth his adventures as they ought on the stage, it was sure to be the making of his fortune.

Creevy having urged his painful case, if he should be obliged to tarry in the inn until money and a coat should arrive from home, the young men promised to see what could be done; and having left him, they, in the mean time, went to “fork out” the showman, that they might farther entertain themselves out of his mouth with the misadventures of the missionary of Oldwood.

An hour had not elapsed when Creevy was waited upon by his proved friend, the murderous man himself, who came to inquire after his health, and to bring him tidings more comforting than even all his piety could procure him from his friends of the cause.

The showman told Creevy (after glorying a little *unfeelingly* in his calamities) that, in discharge of his duty, he had soon after his arrival made it his business to find out the soldier and

his wife, for whose relief he had levied from Creevy the two guineas on the road ; in which he soon succeeded, the regiment being quartered in the town, and all having mustered. But the soldier having now, as he said, received his month's pay, besides some presents from the colonel's lady for his wife, would have none of what was now offered to him ; saying, that he would not disgrace "the king and the duke of York by taking money from such a mean, stingy parson's-drummer!" And as for his wife, "Whew!" said the showman ; "you never saw a woman so proud and saucy as she is!"

The showman therefore had brought back the two guineas, and glad he was to get rid of them, for he could not sleep sound while he had them in his possession. Having explained thus much, he laid down the coin on the table, to the great joy of Creevy ; for money was money, although it came back with some hard words ; and now he would get off out of this unlucky town,

if he could only raise as much as would get tails to his coat.

The honest man of beasts was enabled even to supply this disideratum also ; for it came out, that at the fag-end of the fair, and during the sequel of Creevy's riot, while dead cats and other elegant articles were being thrown about for the pleasure of the crowd, a dirty something alighted upon the stage at our showman's feet, as he was strutting about in the exercise of his vocation, which upon his lifting up, proved to be the tails of a man's coat, which he somehow thought might be Creevy's. Having picked them up, and brought them with him, he now displayed them, dirty as they were.

But Creevy blessed Providence even for this, and observing jocosely, that the dirt had dried on the garment like a weaver's kiss, he was fain to get this appendage of *decency* duly brushed and trimmed, and having employed an inferior artist of the needle to attach them to their ori-

ginal *quarters*, and discharged his bill out of the two guineas, he mounted his mare, and shaking the showman by the hand, and calling him his best friend, after all, he set off with the utmost impatience for Oldwood.

But sad and disheartening were his reflections as he jogged on towards home, and as, late at night, he came, exhausted and weary, towards the outskirts of his beloved village. How would his family receive him, with his face blackened and swollen, and his clothes torn ? and what feasible account could he give of the manner he had come by these disasters, and the loss of the last shilling of his money ? But that was not all ; he had lost, as he now began to be convinced, his time ; he had parted with his own good opinion of himself ; he had even lost his religion ; and that comfortable and self-satisfied habit of thinking to which his mind was accustomed (and of which it is really great cruelty wantonly to deprive any weak man) he was now entirely put

out of. In short, his mind was wholly deranged, and his notions upset, and, like an ill-used stomach, was become irritable and unhealthy, squeamishly throwing off its common aliment.

Where would this end? and what would his religion come to, if it was true, as he found it was, that he had only been deceiving himself and “serving Satan” since he left home? Something was wrong somewhere, for he never had been happy since he deserted the ministry of the venerable Mr. Oxford, whose affecting warnings against presumptuous innovation in religion seemed now to murmur reproachfully in his ears. The very towers of Oldwood Abbey seemed to frown upon him, and he stole past them like a thief in the night; for he fancied that the spirits of his forefathers, whose bones slumbered in the churchyard, would reproach him for some unnamed folly and impiety. As he drew near his own door, and thought of the different manner of his leaving it a short time ago, and his present return,

in self-reproach, schism, and doubt ; he remembered the sublime message of Ahab, king of Israel, to the messengers of Ben-hadad, king of Syria : " Let not him that girdeth on his harness boast himself as he that putteth it off."

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE CONSEQUENCES OF CREEVY'S MISSIONARY TOUR, AND THE SUCCESSFUL DEBUT OF A NEW RELIGIOUS ADVENTURER.

SEVERAL weeks had now passed to the family at Orton Hall since the departure of Mr. Stavely and their relatives and friends; and a dullness approaching to melancholy seemed to reign in the mansion, of which feeling Lydia Orton was the largest partaker.

A disappointment in an affair of the heart, concerning an event so important as marriage and settlement in life, and with one who is the heart's own choice, is, even with respect to time and certainty, a serious thing to a reflecting female; and Lydia was not one who could, even with all her other mental qualities, get over an

event of this kind without some deep and impressive suffering. The family altogether lived now in much seclusion. Even Helen Spencer had left them to spend the winter in Dublin; and as for their neighbours, Mr. Oxford, the vicar, was the only one with whom they cared much to associate, and he was in ill health.

As for captain Hallam and sir Hugh, they were well enough occasionally at one time, but had now got so wedded to the new comer, Mr. Hanby, and were so much occupied with the themes and business of religion, that, besides having taken a spite at Mr. Orton, they were now completely estranged from their old neighbours of the Hall.

About this period of dull retirement, and when the least domestic news is, in a country village, of interesting importance, it came to be bruited among the servants and upper domestics at the Hall (who had not escaped the general local awakening about religion), that a new preacher,

of most extraordinary abilities and strange opinions, had just made his advent into Oldwood ; and one or two had actually seen and heard him. But the greatest discrepancy of opinion prevailed respecting what he really was, and as to what particular species of religion he had come to convert the people. Some said he was of the church, but had greatly improved the church's doctrines; but this was most strenuously denied by others, who said that the gentleman was a great enemy to all churches and chapels whatsoever, and priests, and clergy, and all, and maintained, that the elect ought all to meet in chambers, as in Saint Paul's time, and to speak every one himself single-handed, as on Pentecost day at the eleventh hour in the morning.

But the name or title of this extraordinary gentleman's religion caused the greatest controversy in the kitchen, (for the servants at the Hall had all become learned and polemical of late, by means of the new bookseller, introduced

by Mr. Hanby, and his tracts, and of the new religious library, which was in a most flourishing condition). Some said he was of an entire new light, and others that his was only the old light kindled up again. Some said he was an antinomian and a separatist; others that he was nothing but a Sandemanian or a Glassite; while a third maintained that his doctrine was only methodism seven times purified: but they were sure it would yet cover the whole earth, and get the upper hand of the church of England.

The best informed, however, seemed to conclude that he was either a baptist, or an anabaptist, or a paedo-baptist, although they confessed their inability to decide whether he was a "general baptist;" or a "particular baptist," but the whole household determined to go to hear him next Sunday, leave or not leave, even if Orton Hall should be consigned to the care of the rooks and the bats.

Now, as sublime subjects have a tendency up-

wards, these noises soon reached the ears of the old lady of the Hall, who had herself been much put about on religion of late ; and as the stranger was to give a sermon in a barn in the village, on the very evening she had heard of him, being Friday, she hinted the affair to her daughter, and her wish that Lydia would accompany her that night, that she might, just out of curiosity, hear this extraordinary person. In Lydia's present state of mind, any amusement was a relief ; and having arranged to leave the carriage that should take them in the evening at the door of Mr. Groom in the village, and that they should walk thence to the place of meeting, not to excite observation, the hour was looked forward to by the ladies with some degree of interest.

We must now inform the reader, that the remarkable person now announced to preach in Oldwood was no other than Mr. Provan, the slouch-hatted friend of Creevy, from Donchester

and Ladford, who, seeing from the brick-maker's statement an opening for "the truth" in this sequestered and unbeaten village, had bethought him of trying the gospel in this new vineyard. There is a numerous class of persons in these kingdoms calling themselves *professors of religion*, who obtain a very considerable influence, particularly on the lower orders of society. Nothing could be more apt or appropriate than this common appellation by which they are called; they *profess religion* like other professors of the arts, or as the poor schoolmaster professes to make young gentlemen merchants, or the quack professes medicine: but the pith of the business is, that, either directly given up to it, or as amateurs and lovers of the gospel, they manage to live by it in various degrees of worldly comfort and honour.

Such was Mr. Provan; but a man far above the common in respect of talents, and upon whose

previous history we would not now enter. His entry into Oldwood was by no means the only consequence that arose out of the recent religious tour of our friend, Mr. Creevy ; for the speech, even of the Oldwood-man, at lord Overly's meeting, and the impression which his accounts of the state of religion at home had made in different quarters among the lower class, so provoked the speculations of pious adventurers, that, in the course of three weeks after his return, the village was regularly invested by a locust of converters besides Mr. Provan, some of them willing, like St. Paul, to labour with their hands during the week. The methodists had sent a detachment, both Wesleyan and Calvinistic, and a large Ranters' tent was already erected, as if in opposition to the plans of Mr. Hanby, within sight of his mansion, and at the very foot of Mount Carmel.

The place which Mr. Provan had got to preach in was a large ancient building of little

more than one apartment, which, though at present used as a barn, had in times very distant belonged to a convent of black friars. It was ribbed with gothic pilasters, which, together with the timbers of the old oaken roof, carved here and there with winged heads and other strange and uncouth symbols, and the walls deeply blackened with age, gave it a solemn, if not dismal, appearance. There was something about this tomb-looking place, when Lydia Orton entered it, well calculated to strike and impress a melancholy and imaginative mind. The small company assembled were already on their knees in prayer, which was heard in low and deep tones from a figure hardly visible at the upper end of the building, and echoed in solemn murmurs among the grotesque and dimly seen shapes on the roof of the lofty apartment. There was only as many small candles near the speaker as served to concentrate the light on a

few figures, and to contrast pale faces and black walls, in a manner which Rembrandt himself would have delighted to paint.

The face of the speaker—which, from the place where Lydia sat, was seen only by the partial light falling upon his forehead and prominent features—thrown in bold relief from the dark wall against which he stood in an attitude of deep devotion,—appeared to be that of a man not more than thirty-five years of age; the visage somewhat long, and the colour rather pale, and something in the lineaments that, if not handsome, was striking, and most appropriate for devotional effect. The audience, composed chiefly of decent and “devout women,” hung upon the words which this stranger addressed to the Deity, and joined in his devotions with a fervour approaching to enthusiasm. The scene altogether first impressed and then affected the serious mind of Lydia, and she soon caught a portion of the

pervading spirit, and was carried forward by the speaker into a participation in the same feelings of breathless attention to his bold and original expressions, and of deep interest in the general devotion.

At length, the extempore prayer being ended, the people being seated, and the book opened, the stranger began with a look of humble mildness, and in a tone like entreaty, to address those present. As he warmed in his speech, and appealed to the Scriptures with the fluent confidence of one perfectly master of his subject, there appeared to Lydia something in the picture presented by this small assembly of *disciples* so peculiar, that it gave her new ideas of religion and religious exercises. In her present state of mind this was a gratification, and even an excitement almost rising to sublimity, and impressing her with a serious, and even lofty interest in those absorbing subjects, which have reference to a state and to things which, in the grand incorrect-

ness of eastern phraseology, are called “ eternal, immortal, and invisible.” These deep considerations drunk in by the ear, and aided by her own solemn thoughts, were further impressed by what appeared before her eyes, as she looked round upon the dark conventional walls, the mouldering gothic carvings, and antique roof, scarcely visible in the dim light of a few scattered tapers, which only served to show in imaginative relief the upturned faces and hard-featured, yet deeply interested, countenances of the simple listeners to the awful things set before them. And as the speaker continued with a vigorous plainness of speech, and a glowing manliness of manner, which appeared to her perfectly apostolic, to denounce the wrath of Heaven against the heartlessness and deceit of modern Christianity, and directed the attention of those who heard him to the simple and interesting narrative of Luke the beloved physician, in the beginning of the Acts of the Apostles, of the assembling of the first

Christians, as persons not of this world, in obscure places and upper chambers, after their Lord had risen from the dead and ascended up on high, and of those simple and sincere converts continuing stedfastly together with one accord and with one heart, in brotherhood, in prayer, in almsgiving, and in the breaking of bread,—and that the Lord added to this interesting company daily “such as should be saved,”—the picture affected her heart, and touched her even to tears, while she fancied she saw it almost revived and realized before her, in this deeply devout company, and in the graceful boldness of this remarkable stranger.

As he further proceeded in his discourse, Lydia was more and more affected and interested. Never having heard Mr. Allmouth, nor any other but the mild and classical Mr. Oxford, she knew nothing of the beaten track of religious phraseology, and the hackneyed subjects and sentiments of modern fanaticism and of the envious candidates

for preaching-popularity. Being no remarked church-goer, in the usual sense of the term, she had no “itching ears,” and was as unaware of the dullness of common *preachification*, as of the charms of religious variety, such as the Scotch generally, and other religious amateurs, run after, for the same reason that the musical world run after a new singer. In short, she had not got to the length of being a religious critic, and was as yet quite unaccustomed to judge of preaching *as an art*, and to understand in what manner the poetical metaphors and touching language of Scripture may be employed in the best manner for the purposes of *effect*, and in the way which is properly called cant; the mere instrument of fanatics and traders in religion. In the singleness and purity of her heart, and in that simplicity of virtuous nature and spontaneous piety that is almost sublime, she thought only of *truth*—divine truth—holy, homefelt, religious truth! as she attended to the searching

and exposing representations of the human heart drawn out of the Bible by this stranger;—and it was only of the awful authority of God himself that she thought, as she listened to the proclamation of the gospel, and to the denunciations of inspiration “revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men.”

She returned home deeply impressed, and strongly affected. The sunken solitude of mind, amounting almost to torpor, in which her disappointment in love, the absence of Stavely, and the seclusion in which she lately lived had left her, was now succeeded and aroused into that activity so natural to ardent and reflective minds, by means of a new and most solemn subject. She heard the preacher again and again, with that enthusiastic pleasure which every new view of what is deemed interesting truth gives to abstracted and inquisitive minds; she studied the Scriptures at home with the eagerness of one running a race. Every new conviction flashed

across her mind, whilst she reasoned upon the consequences of each discovery: and as she came to conclusion after conclusion, upon the extraordinary system of theo-philosophy of the New Testament so ably argued by St. Paul, and saw successively his profound meanings, and understood his wonderful reasonings, from the Mosaic to the Christian dispensations; she was astonished at her previous ignorance and unconcern, and insensibly imbibed sentiments of reverence and admiration for the religious stranger who had been the means of enlightening her upon these subjects, such as the absent and doting Stavely little dreamt of.

As she continued her religious inquiries, and imbibed, one by one, the peculiar doctrines of Mr. Provan, she began to view every object in nature, and every human being as well as herself, in reference not to any consideration of their own happiness in this world, so much as in relation to a future world, and an eternal existence of

happiness or misery; and to those great and astonishing plans of the Almighty with regard to them, of which this, their ultimate destiny, seemed to her to be only the final fulfilment. The mind of her religious prompter was imbued with those sentiments called highly Calvinistic, or almost Antinomian, which seem to make a separation between what was taught by Jesus of Nazareth and one of his earliest followers, namely, Saint Paul, upon the awful subject of the plans of the Deity in disposing of the eternal destinies of poor short-lived mortals; dwelling much upon what is called the sovereignty of God, in preparing sentient beings as earthen vessels devoted to purposes of honour or dishonour; or as vessels of *mercy* prepared for happiness, or vessels of *wrath* fitted for destruction. Upon this dread subject the speaker dwelt much; and as he showed the iniquity of the world, and the small number of those who understood these things, who wished to know them, or who cared for them; and that

the Scriptures made the seeing of them and believing them in those peculiar bearings in which they hang together as a system ; the condition, or rather the sign to know those who are doomed to eternal happiness or eternal punishment, and *proved* all these things as he went on by the words of Scripture, Lydia could not but see how the doom to happiness was narrowed to a mere fraction of the human race ; and the doom to all eternity, to what she shuddered to think of, was widened beyond calculation ; and seemed to embrace in its outstretched and remorseless arms, or rather in the greedy jaws of the fiery indignation of God's sovereignty, the countless millions pursuing enjoyment for a few restless and weary years on the surface of this little ball in the universe of creation.

There was something that astonished Lydia in Mr. Provan, when descanting upon this subject. His eyes had that expression when animated, that he could infuse into them a look of

feeling so affecting, that she has sat for ten minutes together looking into his countenance as he entreated men to believe and be reconciled to God, with her eyes streaming with tears, and her heart almost bursting with sorrow at the insensibility of the world to such important concerns. She thought him a man possessed of the finest and purest feelings, and she almost loved him for it, if it were only because people love those who partake of that of which they themselves are somewhat ashamed, and who can sympathize from experience with their own weakness. And yet she observed that when preaching upon the fearful damnation of all those who rejected the gospel (that is, as he understood it), although unable to embrace it unless it were "given them of God;" for, quoted he, "the wind bloweth where it listeth, and so is every one that is born of the spirit," he seemed to have lost all sympathy with the common nature of erring man; and dealt about "the damnation

of hell," dwelt upon the horrors of that bottomless Tophet where the mercy of God is clean gone, and where the gnawing worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched, with a gloating, if not exulting eloquence, and glorified God for his dread attributes in dooming to this *Inferno* the general mass of his creatures, even "the whole world that lieth in wickedness."

She thought it was her duty to admire the Deity for this, for Christians ought to possess "the mind of God" as much as possible, and to join in admiration of what she believed He was pleased to do "in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth," and rejoice in his sovereignty in disposing of the mass of humanity even as "vessels of wrath." Yet in this respect Lydia had not attained to the same stature as Mr. Provan: her poor heart ran into deep and sorrowing sympathies for her brethren of mankind; and amid all her joy in her successive discoveries and conclusions in theology, she suf-

fered occasionally a distress of mind, amounting at times to perfect horror, as she dwelt upon the constant production, the present insensibility, and fearful eternal destiny of poor human beings; of that countless and ephemeral crowd, that are continually rushing in at that wide gate that leadeth to everlasting destruction.

What a revolution was now in her thoughts ! How changed the subject of her every-day meditations ! Under what a different aspect did now appear to her the world and all that is therein ! The green earth, the blue sky, and all that they inherit ;—and herself, and her relations and acquaintances, many whom she loved, deeply loved, and admired for qualities far superior to what she possessed, and who were insensible, if not opposed, to “the truth ;” scoffing, perhaps, at those awful views of the destiny of themselves and others, as evident from the Scriptures, to which she had been so happily brought ;—and her father, her dear old father, not likely to remain

very long on this side of eternity, and as little likely to leave the ministry of Mr. Oxford, and give ear to the uncompromising doctrine of apostolic times, to the belief of which only was attached any escape from the wrath to come;—and her mother and brothers;—and Stavely, perhaps *he* might be brought to; but if it was not so ordered that he was to be one of—— (and the words were plain, “it is not of him that willeth”) —Good God! the bare idea, the thought, of the possibility of her and Stavely being parted eternally—of his being consigned to that place—the very supposition would take away her senses, if she dared to think of it!

She continued many weeks dwelling upon these subjects, reading, reasoning, and inquiring; sometimes glowing with joy at her escape from “the wrath to come,” but oftener in the deepest melancholy from sympathy with the apparently certain fate of great part of the world around her. It was that sentiment of sweet and bene-

volent sympathy with mankind, and the candid disposition to excuse their follies and weaknesses, and to see good feelings and pure thoughts manifesting themselves in many a virtuous bosom, that was the cause of her unhappiness; but which, strange to say, seemed to give Mr. Provan, and the religious authors whose books she now began to get out of the new library of the village, no trouble or concern. On the contrary, they denounced every feeling of this kind which springs up in the human bosom, as an indication of that opposition to God with which every one is born into the world, and constantly stopped the mouths of inquirers with the silencing answer of St. Paul, " Nay, but who art thou, O man, that repliest against God?"

During this time, her father was ignorant of what was going on, excepting that he observed her melancholy and abstracted look, and her frequent seclusion, and study, and conversations

with her mother; which, although he thought strange, he only attributed to the consequences of her marriage disappointment, and to that disposition to take seriously and think deeply upon those evils and disappointments which are flung about from one to another in the world like a shuttlecock, with almost as much lightness of effect.

But one day the post brought two letters, one from Mr. George Orton to his father, dated London, and the other from Helen Spencer to Lydia, dated St. Stephen's Green, Dublin, both of which it may be necessary to lay before the reader.

*"Thatch. d-house, St. James's, London,
12th Nov. 18—.*

"My dear Father,

"IN my former letter, dated about three weeks back, I mentioned particularly the wishes of lord St. James, and several other of our

friends, that I should delay no longer, but get into parliament next election, &c. ; and I have now in addition nothing material to say, but that I have made up my mind to avail myself of the support and wishes of that nobleman, and several other friends, and to start for P—, in the election expected about May next. Of course I have consulted Louis Stavely, as I mentioned formerly, for whom the honour was originally intended ; and, since I received your last, have heard from him upon the subject, expressing those generous and gentlemanly sentiments, such as become his noble character ; and I cannot agree with your conclusions, that he ought not instantly to go into Chancery against that ungrateful old—I won't say what—sir Hugh.

“ But what I have principally to say to you is about my brother Alfred, of whose late unexpected proceedings I perhaps ought to have informed you sooner ; but did not foresee any thing

of consequence from them at first, and in truth delayed as long as possible to forward intelligence which must be unpleasant to you.

" It appears that, about two months ago, he had gone with some acquaintance, in a kind of half frolic, to hear a sermon, in some sort of sectarian or methodist chapel, by one of those persons who are much admired as preachers by that class. The poor folks were not accustomed to see gentlemen in their vulgar meeting-house, and Alfred and his friend were, I am told, put into the most conspicuous place. Two days after this, a wealthy old man belonging to the meeting-house waited upon Alfred at his chambers in the Temple, and employed him at once in some business connected with his profession. Alfred, you know, was always rather fond of money, and, without detailing particulars, became from that day a regular attendant at the chapel, grew quite religious after the way and manner of this

sect, discarded his former associates for the society of a set of people with whom I should be ashamed to recognise him as a brother, was inveigled into a love affair with the old man's daughter, whom, I fear, he may think of marrying; and even talks seriously of throwing up his profession, and turning methodist parson.

"I have laughed at all this twenty times, but it has now become serious; and while I ask your advice how to act, I fear every thing in the shape of discountenance or remonstrance will be taken as persecution, and aggravate the evil; and know not whether it may not be best to leave this infatuation to itself, unless you think it advisable to send him for a time to the continent for the enlargement of his ideas, which is perhaps the best treatment for one of his disposition. But your wisdom and experience shall of course guide me, if you think proper to interfere through me.

"I need not say how much all this has hurt me, or repeat how cordially I agree with you in what

I have often heard you urge, of the danger to many of tampering with what I call their religious constitution ; and in the wisdom and safety of a national church, superintended by learned and enlightened men, for the teaching of morals, and for that judicious exposition of our religion, such as sensible moderate men may rally round, and to discountenance the efforts of such restless or crafty spirits as are never wanting in a country of free discussion. The very vulgarity of the line of conduct which Alfred has adopted galls me ; and I should even have preferred his taking to ‘philosophical infidelity,’ as at least more like a gentleman ; for time, and experience, and knowledge of mankind might cure him of that : but if he runs the race of sectarianism, and has a mind superior to being led by the nose by his various preachers, he is almost sure, if he *reasons*, to land himself at last on infidelity, connected with disgust, which is well known to be incurable.

" But I fear I become tiresome. Say to my dear sister Lydia, that I will write to her soon. God bless you, my dear father, and believe me ever, with the highest respect,

" Your most affectionate son,

" **GEORGE HERVEY ORTON.**"

CHAPTER XX.

LIGHT READING, AND DUBLIN CHARACTERISTICS.

HELEN SPENCER's letter of two sheets length, besides cross-writing and corner-scrap, was such an odd production, that we choose to give it in a new chapter as follows:

“*Dublin, 11th Nov. 18—*

“ My dear, sober, sad Lydia,

“ What can be the reason you have never written a word to me since I left the Hall? I am angry, seriously angry. But that is not what I was going to say.

“ I will tell you the truth. I can do it best on paper in this case; for the paper can't look at one when one is writing, and so one need not blush. But that is not what I have to say.

" In short, I am in my wonderings about your brother Alfred, who is in London. You know you used to joke me about Alfred, and perhaps you may be likely to do so now. But that is not what I was going to say. I can't make out this Alfred at all. You know he used to pay me some attentions, or so; but then you know we are cousins. However, that is not what—Alfred, you must know, wrote me a long letter, which I received but three days ago—and such a letter ! It gives me a headache to think of it. I protest I have been three whole days in reading it, and I'm sure I don't understand three sentences in it. And what do you think it's all about ? ' About love, and all that,' you'll say. Not a word that any rational flirt of eighteen would give a fig for ; but all about religion !

" Now I would not have taken this so ill ; but he never had written to me before, and I received his letter just as I was recovering from the effects of a party I had been at the night

previous—and such a party! But I am not come to that yet.

“ Now, my dear, I am sure you will write to me just after you receive this; and when you do, just tell me, yes or no, if your brother Alfred has gone mad, poor fellow! If it were only a little folly, or nonsense, or so, I would not think a bit the worse of him for it, for I love a little nonsense now and then; it is quite in my way. But that he should grow mad—sober, serious, religious, rational mad—talking madness in good set terms—oh, it is too much!

“ But about the party that gave me the megrims—as I was saying, I never could have believed there were such parties in being. However, I had better tell you from the beginning how I got near such a place at all.

“ My uncle Scott is a most useful old beau, and jaunts me about every where, when I have not younger people; and one day he had me in the curriicle, taking me down towards Howth by

a pleasant country road, when, behold, we were stopped by the road terminating at the gate of a tolerably handsome mansion, and farther we could not get. But Mr. Scott was not to be stopped, and on inquiry of the gatekeeper, he was told where the road through the grounds led, and that we could get through by merely asking permission of the proprietor, whom he pointed out in the fields before us. We sent forward our servant to ask leave; and although the owner, when our man got up to him, was in a terrible fume, scolding his steward, and threatening his men for not doing as much work as he wished them, he got at once into better humour, and not only gave permission, but met us bowing, and showing us the way in the most polite manner, no doubt pleased at decent people passing through his grounds; for it turned out that he was a wealthy baker or brewer, or some such gentleman tradesman, who was rich and religious, and lived in great splendour both in town and coun-

try. When the gentlemen began to converse, it appeared that they had met at some public committee ; for my uncle, being an idle man, takes a pride in such things : and so, after a few days, what will you have, but we must be invited to a party at the gentleman's great house in Rutland-square.

" I dressed myself carefully for the party, for you know, my dear, there is often as much pleasure in the dressing as in all the rest ; and away we went: but when I got there, I was so much ashamed, that I deliberated whether I should not take a headache, or any thing, to get off at once before the carriage was well out of hearing.

" And what do you think I was ashamed of ? Why, of myself, and of my company. The house and furniture were splendid, but you never saw such people, except you may have gone to look at the low faces and mean dresses at a conventicle ; and they stared at me and my dress, which

was only passable, as if I had been a show. I am sure, by their upturned eyes and whispers, that they thought my very neck was sinfully white. Two old maids, I might say *of colour*, the sisters of a religious apothecary, who seemed to take the lead in the favour of the master of the house, I am sure, from their sour and prim looks, could have scratched out my eyes, because I showed few pretensions to either ugliness or piety ; and, by the drawing together of their mouths, evidently reproved the side-looks of one or two sectarian young men, who were vulgarly expressing something like gallantry to me.

“I wonder what could have induced the owner of this well-furnished house to have asked my uncle or me to a religious party ; for my uncle, poor man, is very easy in that way, and more inclined to laugh than otherwise. But it was not a religious party neither, else we should have had singing of hymns, as I am told, and Bible reading, which would have been a variety. It

was only a party of religious people, who, from their peculiarities in this way, had, notwithstanding their wealth, no other acquaintances but those of the meanest sort, if not in station, at least in abilities; mere needy flatterers, and psalm-singers, looking for paltry places and religious honours about public societies and occasional God-sends of loaves and fishes. The gentleman himself was a tolerably genteel little man in his appearance, with a haughty tyrannical look, from his habitual watching of his dependants, as well as from flattery and constitutional ill temper; and the lady, who was a short woman, with a pretty face—but she was an invalid, and lay all the evening on a sofa, choking with bile, and sour with hypochondria;—her only enjoyment, poor creature, was feasting her eyes on the grandeur of the rooms, and her ears on the flattery of her pious friends, and their incontinent wonder at her magnificence.

“ What on earth, Lydia, could I do in such

a place as this, among the meanest dowdies, and men not so good as my footman? My uncle, who is a humorous harlequin of a man, said he was quite amused, and sneered and leered; and when I offered to talk to any body present about the play or the opera, or the last new singer, or novel, he pinched my arm, and checked me like a child, saying that I should be affronted; which indeed would surely have been the case; for when I attempted such talk, they only stared at me, for they were well acquainted with the manners and practices of the Hindoos and the Esquimaux, and all that, having learned every thing about them from the Missionary Magazine; but, poor things! they were quite ignorant of the vanities of the world around them.

“ Cousin Lydia, what a night I had! There was not a card, for it would have been sinful to touch such things. There was no music, for that would have been of the nature of *revelling*, and was the practice of “ the world,” from

which *they* were made to differ ; there was not a word of conversation, except among some skirmishing parties formed here and there for religious controversy ; for as for the occurrences of the day, these people had no interest in them, except such matters as the arrival of a new preacher, or the proposed meeting of some religious society. Of general knowledge they possessed none, else they never would have been the people they were. The only earthly *employment* of this vulgar party was walking vacantly up and down the splendid rooms, eating confectionary, and drinking lemonade or liqueurs, after the labour of tea and coffee was over.

“ Never was ennui and unhappiness more evident in the countenances of any company met together professedly for enjoyment ; for the novelty to the mean people who were bidden was soon over, and in mental inanity and austere dullness the weary hours drawled on for the ultimate relief of the sufferers. I was pitying

the younger part of the company, the female children of the proprietor ; but I learned that they were so constitutionally ill-tempered, and so habituated to severe restraint, that to them the joyous playfulness of youth was unknown ; and not expecting to be happy, they were not more miserable than usual. As for the occupier of this fine house, he wore nothing more than his ordinary care-worn and impatient look, put himself in a few passions at the servants, if they deviated in the slightest degree from the details of his minute orders ; and, in spite of his attention to his sick wife, evidently admired me and any young body more than he wished the apothecary's sisters to know. But to him also this was a weary night. In fact, he never was happy but when officiating at public societies and charitable meetings, which made to him a species of popularity, and assisted his trade.

“ Think of my state on this horrible night !

although the suffering was almost made up by the insight it gave me into a certain sort of miserable society pretty abundant here. The only person in the shape of a gentlewoman whom I could speak to, was the housekeeper, a respectable middle-aged woman, who, by her looks, as she sat labouring at the tea-urn, and acting as matron and bottle-holder to people she evidently despised, made me sensible of her misery. When I got beside her, we gradually communicated to each other our mutual afflictions, and condoled on the sorrows of a mean sanctified party, without either music, cards, dancing, or conversation.

“ I scolded my uncle well, when I got out, for bringing me to such a place, for he must have known something of what we might expect among such people ; but he only laughed all the way home, and told me it was worth fifty pounds to me, as I was fond of scribbling, for I might write an account of it to lady this, or lord that,

to help out the first new novel, where really something like it was much wanted, only to make a little variety.

"Now, think of your brother Alfred's sermonizing letter, just coming in next morning, on the back of this frightful party! I have scribbled all my paper over; but pray, write me at once if he is gone crazy, and all other news. Excuse me, my very dear Lydia; but let me say seriously, of all the chances of unhappiness a woman runs the hazard of when she marries, that of living with such people as I met the other night would be to me the most intolerable."

"Your ever affectionate

"HELEN SPENCER."

Now it happened that on the very morning when these two letters were brought to Orton Hall, an incident had occurred at the breakfast-table which, though very common in many places, was quite new in this family. This was no other than a little domestic bickering, wherein

a few sharp and angry words passed between Mr. Orton and his lady, which even slightly brought in Lydia, and left all parties rather sore, if not displeased, with each other. The old gentleman, whose health was rather declining, being somewhat irritable, said a testy word to the lady; the reply to which she ended by muttering something about little being to be expected that was kindly and good from people who cared nothing for religion. This imprudent word was rather ill-timed, for the old gentleman had felt much annoyed of late by her and Lydia's frequent visits to the anabaptist, as Mr. Provan was called; but he had taken credit to himself for considerable toleration and forbearance in not making any remark on the subject, until aroused by an observation which he thought neither deserved nor prudent.

Something like difference had indeed more than once taken place between Mr. Orton and his lady of late, such as had not been known to

them during the course of a married life of near thirty years, on the subject of the rev. Mr. All-mouth, and her frequent allusion to his sayings. The old gentleman had occasionally, as strongly as was consistent with his notions of toleration, thought proper to disapprove of her frequent visits to the new church to hear this priest and his peculiar and heated exposition of the doctrines of the church of England ; but being an easy man, and his ancestors having, ever since the reformation, been staunch members of the church of England, he had, in fact, thought little on the religious goings on in the village with reference to his own family, until this very morning, when the observations of his wife, and even Lydia, roused him into something like alarm on the subject.

It was in this state of feeling, and while full of thought on the apparent revolution in his family, that he received the letter from his son George, giving an account of the strange infatuation of Alfred. He read the letter over and over with

all the distress of mind of an anxious father; but when he came to collate with it the observations of his wife, and the late strange conduct and secluded melancholy of his beloved daughter Lydia, pains and apprehensions came across his mind of a kind almost intolerable to his feelings, and such as never before had interrupted the even tenor of his life.

His first impulse was to send for Lydia, and inquire of her seriously regarding her late frequent attendances on the preaching of this anabaptist, who had caused such a noise in the village, and blamed himself much for remissness in not noticing this circumstance sooner. But the truth was, that, besides his sentiments of kindly toleration, had it been Mr. Allmouth she had gone over to, or the new sect which he had understood was set up by Mr. Hanby of Mount Carmel, or any other species of opposition which was but little removed from the church of England, he would have felt more alarm. But the transition

from the established church to the obscure peculiarities of the sect of baptists, or anabaptists, as they were called, meeting in a ruined convent or barn, without either clergyman or regular form of worship, was so great, the jump over such an interval so vast and incredible, that he never dreamt any of his family capable of degrading themselves by the most distant contemplation of a purpose so extraordinary.

He now felt the want of Mr. Jarman, or some intelligent person with whom he could advise in this emergency. His country acquaintances who lived at a distance were in London, and those near were of late all infected more or less by the new sectarian mania. He had heard strange accounts of Mr. Hallam of late; and he finally ordered the carriage and set off to lay these matters before his judicious religious friend, the rev. Mr. Oxford.

Meantime, the mind of Lydia became roused from the intense abstraction of her religious in-

quiries, by the effect upon her father of the few words that had passed at table that morning, and by the humorous account of the Dublin religious party contained in the letter just received from Helen Spencer. She began to remember that she was in the world, and had relations and friends among whom she was called to act a part according to the usual expectations of society, and that the world had its own way of judging of conduct, and even of sentiments, religious or otherwise, which might cause a deviation from the common course of life and worldly enjoyment.

But then she saw clearly, as she thought, from "the divine testimony," that the world was wrong, and always would be so, so long as it was the world (for it was said to lie universally in wickedness), and that the righteous or elect, being but "a very small remnant," and their opinions and those of the world being "contrary the one to the other," as Mr. Provan

had clearly shown, would always be in opposition to the people of God to the end of time; and that this opposition she must look for, and be prepared for. It was only part of the cross which Christians must take up daily in this howling wilderness. The Christian life was but a continual warfare with the world without, and inclinations for the pleasures of the world within. The joys and honours of life were held out by Satan before the corrupt inclinations of sinful men merely as a bait to lure them to everlasting sorrow; but these they were constantly to resist until death should deliver them from this incessant warfare.

But then, her father—he was undoubtedly of “the world;” for he opposed these scriptural views, and was likely to continue to do so, for he would not even read the able treatises upon those great subjects which were in the valuable new library which had been set up in the village; much less would he even listen to the gospel from such as

Mr. Provan. And her mother was little better, although of her there was more hope, notwithstanding her present partiality for the erroneous views of Mr. Allmouth. Her brothers also were of the world ; and poor, dear, thoughtless, amiable Helen Spencer was of the world ; and Stavely was of the world !

As she pursued this train of reflection, she again sank into her profound melancholy, from which she was but little relieved by the reflection which she ever and anon called in for consolation, that although destined to this harassing warfare while “in the body,” she was herself a brand plucked from the burning, and her reward was to be in heaven. She again turned to her books and her Bible, to search and see if these things were so ; and, having received the general key to all Scripture from Mr. Provan, every word she read, and passage she adverted to, served to confirm the views she had taken.

CHAPTER XXI.

REPENTANCE—BETTER LATE THAN NEVER.

THE result of the conversation between Mr. Orton and the reverend vicar was little more than the consolation and relief that people feel in mutual communication of their troubles; for scarce any conclusion was come to as to what it was advisable to do with regard to Miss Orton. The delicacy imposed by considerations of toleration, as well as from Mr. Orton's knowledge of his daughter's serious character, and the extreme strength of his affectionate feelings and disposition to indulgence, made the subject extremely embarrassing; and flattering himself that, both in regard to his son and her, things might not turn out to be so bad as they at present appeared, both the gentlemen concurred in the cautious

policy of the aged, to do nothing ; but wait until they might see what events or changes time might produce. Meantime, an event soon occurred which seemed to promise relief to Mr. Orton, as far as his daughter was concerned, from a quarter whence he least expected it, and which greatly contributed to bring ease to his mind.

One morning, as he rode out after breakfast, a servant from Lynch Castle came up to him and delivered a message, purporting that sir Hugh Salvage, having been seriously ill, was now considered in imminent danger, and had expressed a strong wish to see him immediately. This was a circumstance so unexpected, that, apprehending something might take place in regard to the concerns of Mr. Stavely, he thought it prudent to take with him a witness ; and having pitched upon Mr. Oxford, he immediately ordered the carriage, and took with him on his way that judicious and respectable clergyman.

When they arrived at the Castle, they found

sir Hugh in a very weak state, but perfectly sensible; and Mr. Orton soon perceived, from the unexpected cordiality of his manner, and the pleasure which lighted up his sunken features on perceiving his old friend, Mr. Oxford; that some material change had taken place in the sentiments of the dying man. Motioning the two visitors to seat themselves near to him by the bedside, the sick knight began, by inquiring in a very earnest manner after Mr. Stavely, and said it had given him great uneasiness of late to think that, from past circumstances, *he* might have been the means of preventing, or, at least, delaying, a marriage between the promising nephew of his late worthy benefactor (whom he was likely soon to follow to another world) and Mr. Orton's daughter, whose praise was in every one's mouth. Had he been permitted to live to witness this union, he should have died happily. Whether he should be spared to do Mr. Stavely justice to the extent he wished, he did not know, and scarcely dared to hope; but

what was in his power he should gladly do, while life was spared to him; and so saying, he put into Mr. Orton's hands a bundle of papers and parchments, which he had ready tied up beside him.

If Mr. Orton was astonished at this, he was still more surprised when he heard the old knight, after a little rest, deliver himself as follows:—

“ Gentlemen,—for I address you both,—you are old friends,—old and valued friends,—and Heaven, notwithstanding my weaknesses, and my late unworthy conduct to the son of my old benefactor, has not made me suffer the additional distress and disgrace of dying with the bad opinion of men whose good thoughts and prayers doubtless avail much upon the bed of death, and whose favourable opinion I may yet, by this happy opportunity, avail myself to regain, before I go hence, and be no more.

“ Mr. Orton, it is not for me to speak of my own good or evil qualities to you;—the time has

nearly come when I must render up my account. But this I will say, that I have all my life been more or less liable to be led by others; and I now particularly allude to a man, who has lately come to be our neighbour—that man Hanby, who, by his artful schemes (into the details of which I cannot now enter), was the man who prevailed upon me to use Mr. Stavely with great injustice; to quarrel with my oldest friends; to leave my church and my early principles; and to sanction his foolish and sectarian schemes, to my own disgrace, and the disturbance of the tranquillity of my old age.

“ It is to you, however, Mr. Orton—to your energetic and friendly interference, that I owe my salvation from adding another act of injustice to those that I was guilty of at the period of my infatuation; and to you also I am indebted for the discreet services, or rather friendship, in my latter hours, of this lively and amiable youth,”—and here he pointed to young Groom, who

watched at his bedside, and who now regarded Mr. Orton with looks of the deepest gratitude and respect,—“who has been much comfort to me, and been the means of opening my eyes to many strange things which have lately taken place in the village.

“I see,” he continued, after another pause, “that you wish to express the surprise you feel at my change of mind; but my hearing is so bad, that conversation would be painful. I read pleasure and satisfaction in your looks; and that is enough for me, and makes me happy in the approach of that hour, which I feel not to be far distant.

“Mr. Oxford, my dear, old, and steady friend, you are well come, and welcome you are to speak to me of those important considerations in the view of death, for which, by your learning and judgment, you are so well qualified, in the midst of the changeling follies and religious quackery of the world, and to administer the rites of our

excellent church, from which I have lately been so unworthy a recreant. Mr. Orton, I see you are affected. You can retire now, while our friend, the clergyman, remains with me for a short space in the exercise of the consoling duties of his office. One thing would have added much to the peace and happiness of my dying hour,—could I be yet spared to see Mr. Stavely, and to ask his forgiveness with the humility becoming a penitent. And, oh ! if I could be permitted life to see the ill I have done repaired, by the union of your amiable daughter, Mr. Orton, with him whom I have, I fear, deeply wronged — But that is a happiness I do not deserve.

“ And now, gentlemen both, give me your hands. I have unburdened to you my mind ;—there is forgiveness with God who is above us—there may surely be forgiveness with men !”

Mr. Orton departed, deeply affected, but relieved, and even melted with pleasure as he thought of the repentance of the old man, and

that *he* had personally had the satisfaction of witnessing the ultimate triumph of virtue and solid principle. He now with thankfulness thought he saw every thing clear before him. He anticipated the joy which this news would give to his daughter and to Mr. Stavely. He sat down immediately, and wrote to the latter a full account of all that had passed at the bedside of sir Hugh, conjuring him to make no delay in returning to the Hall; "for who knows," he thought, "but sir Hugh might yet live to see the intended marriage take place?" and, at any rate, when Lydia should be united to a sensible and noble-minded youth, to whom she was so deeply attached, little needed be apprehended from her romantic fancies about religion.

The old gentleman's heart was uplifted with joy, when he witnessed the brightened features and clasped hands of his daughter, as she received his tidings, and anticipated the speedy return of her beloved Stavely. And soon Mr.

Stavely received the same news, and prepared for his return to the Hall, and for taking possession of the Castle, with a heart bounding with pleasure, proportionate to the reaction of the late depressing disappointment. But long before Stavely had arrived, and but shortly after her father's joyful communication, a cloud seemed to have come over the mind of Lydia, and she was observed to go about with a look of stupefaction and almost vacancy, which, in any one but herself, would have been most alarming. Nevertheless, the preparations for the reception of Stavely began actively to employ the servants at the Hall, and even at the Castle, for sir Hugh still lingered.

The dullness of the country was roused by the promised return of the heir of the deceased Arthur Stavely. The marriage of "Lady Lydia" again employed the speculations of the gossips of the neighbourhood. Reports went about, with an air of mystery, that sir Hugh of the Castle in-

cessantly raved, at a particular hour in the night, about a wedding and a winding-sheet; and a portentous apprehension crept round the hearths of the village, that some strange event was to happen shortly at the Hall or at the Castle.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE NATURAL RESULT OF THE OCCURRENCES
PREVIOUSLY DETAILED, SHOWING THAT THERE
ARE OTHER CAUSES OF MISERY AND VEXATION
IN THE WORLD BESIDES WANT OF MONEY.

THERE lived in the village a Mrs. Tupin, a notable talking woman, who had been one of Mr. Provan's earliest converts, and who about this time, from various circumstances, became a person of considerable note in the important occurrences with which this community was now agitated. Mrs. Tupin had seen successively the errors of the various religious parties, from the worldly coldness of Mr. Oxford in the church of England, of which she had been a tranquil member for twenty years, down through the polemical heterodoxy of Mr. Allmouth, whom she next left,

and the miserable half-measures of the methodists, whose new detachment she had afterwards joined, until the real word came to be preached by Mr. Provan, whose apostolic vigour and handsome countenance seemed just the thing that she had all along felt the want of.

This woman had been accustomed to take the lead in all matters of gossip, private and public; had an extraordinary knack in reconciling irreconcilabilities, either on subjects of religious controversy, in the making of a match for marriage, or the making of a convert to the sect whose cause she chose to favour by her espousal. Being the widow of an apothecary, and enabled to live in a little country gentility, the patrician class extended to her many religious condescensions, while the poor looked up to her for patronage and interference, and, being free in her house with her cup of warm water, and often something stronger, to all comers who could talk of marriage or religion, her little apartments be-

came a valuable convenience in the late agitations, and resounded every evening alternately with the fury of controversial battle, and the voice of psalms and praises; mixed with the whisper of love, which none might hear, and the stealing look of intrigue and assignation, which none might see.

Mrs. Tupin now took the lead in Mr. Provan's congregation, of which she had for some time become a regular member, to the great mortification of Mr. Hanby, who was slowly forming his sect at the opposite end of the village, and had, through the new bookseller and librarian, and also by Mr. Strip, his attorney of all work, besieged the haughty dame with as much vigour as sir Hudibras, the orthodox knight, besieged the widow, and with as little success. From these and other causes, which shall soon appear, Mr. Provan's congregation had increased beyond his most sanguine expectation. It now assumed a regular form and constitution upon what the

preacher called apostolic principles: office-bearers were appointed; and, from the constant attendance of part of the Orton family, and even occasionally of captain Hallam, with the important accession of Mrs. Tupin, and the decided countenance of Mr. Creevy, it became an object of the envy, and of course hatred, of all the competitor sects around.

It need not, perhaps, be remarked, how much the unexpected attendance and evident interest of Miss Orton induced the preacher to exert himself from the first, and how much pains he took to suit his discourses to what he soon perceived to be her state of mind, and to lead her on through that mental process usually called conversion, of which he well remembered the steps as they had once affected himself, but from which, alas! he was now, without being quite sensible of it, cooled down, like many others, into the crafty practiser upon the most interesting feelings of gentle and serious natures, and the austere dealer

in the fulminations of the so-called christian theology.

Mr. Provan's principal attention in his discourses being at present directed to their effect on the mind of Lydia (from a well-founded conviction of the influence of example), he soon saw the danger to "the cause" in her intended marriage with a high-spirited and well-educated young man, and preached with great earnestness a series of discourses upon the separation, both in body and spirit, which should exist between those who were the "called of God," and those who were "the children of wrath even as others;" which so appalled the mind of Lydia, that the prospect of Stavely's return filled her meditations with thoughts that amounted almost to distraction. When this view of her state and duty towards God on the one hand, and man on the other, first burst fully upon her mind, she flew down to the village, and to the house of Mrs. Tupin; and, sending for Mr. Provan, sought a full investigation of what the

Scriptures said upon a subject on which all her earthly happiness seemed to depend. She solicited his most serious advice, as a man and a Christian, what she was to do in a case so deeply important to her, and what, as she had now become a sister and a servant of Christ, was the line of duty which, at this juncture, was pointed out for her.

We abstain from giving even the substance of several deep and earnest conversations which occurred between the preacher and his convert. Scripture quotation, and argument therefrom, is not suitable to a work of this sort; and our subject has already led us into it to some extent. We choose rather that the discussion should be seen in its effects upon the now dreadfully depressed and distracted mind of Lydia; and shall only observe, that as she, in the eagerness of her anxiety, put question after question, and turned the subject in every point of view, to try to reconcile the suggestions of her sensitive conscience as to her duty to Heaven, with her union with

Stavely; he did not fail to remind her, with many lamentations and solemn conjurations, of Mr. Stavely's late opposition to the very semblance of the gospel, evinced at the meeting about the library; and defeated every successive effort of her maiden feeling in his favour, by the production of quotation on quotation, and argument on argument, with the unmoved adroitness of a torturer of the inquisition; and while he looked into her tearful eyes as she sat watching his words, with feelings which his own conscience told him were "earthly, sensual, and devilish," he crushed her every hope with the coolness of the butcher, who thrusts his knife into the throat of the lamb that bleats at his knees.

Time moved on, however, bringing about the occurrences we have described at Lynch Castle, and inducing Mr. Stavely to leave Edinburgh, to which Mr. Orton's letters had followed him, and to depart with a joyful heart towards the Hall. The passing of every mile of the road lightened

his heart and added pleasure to his feelings ; and the third evening brought him within seventy miles of all that was dear to him in the world. Next morning he rose with the sun ; for bodily fatigue at his time of life stands little in the way of energy of mind. The morning air refreshed and exhilarated him. As the day advanced, country prospects and rural objects well remembered and interesting, rose before him. Hill and dale, woodland and winding stream, successively passed ; and at length the thick wood that overhung Orton Hall looked rich in the distant horizon ; and even the gothic turrets of his own Castle he soon noticed, peering up beyond the tower of Oldwood Abbey, and throwing their irregular shadows across the imbowered green of the autumnal landscape.

At length he entered the gate of the Hall, and, with exulting feelings, rode up the long avenue, until the waters of the lake near the mansion stretched out before him, with all their

interesting associations. But winter was now approaching, and it struck him that every thing had a wasted and melancholy look. The morning sun had been for some time lost among gray clouds, and the afternoon had become gloomy and unpromising. No one came out to meet him, as on his former approach. In fact, he did not see a creature in all the avenues or grounds. A stillness like death seemed to reign as he slackened his pace near the door, and a cold sensation came over him, as if to communicate an unwelcome prognostication of some new and hopeless disappointment.

He entered the mansion, and was met in the hall by Mr. Orton, who welcomed him with great feeling and cordiality, but without that look of joyful congratulation that the fortunate turn of circumstances seemed to warrant. He entered a lower sitting room, and looked round for Lydia. It was some time before she made her appearance; and when she did, her father strangely withdrew

by the opened door through which she had entered.

A thought crossed Stavely's mind, which made him advance to meet her with more deliberation and less warmth than was consistent with his feelings. She looked pale and melancholy; but after the first moment or two succeeding her father's departure, in which she seemed to hesitate, instead of disappointing him by a changed and cold reception, she advanced with a look of strange excitement, and, catching hold of his hands, and pressing them between hers for a moment with trembling warmth, she gazed intensely in his face for an instant, then burst into tears as she stood, and, her limbs refusing to support her, she nearly fainted in his arms.

There was something in all this that was too much for Louis's feelings, excited as they had been by his meditations during his journey, and his undefined apprehensions on entering the house. He felt the tears rolling down his own cheeks

as they came in contact with hers in the unresisted and warm embrace which followed; and they both wept in silence for a little, as if mutually giving way to nature, preparatory to some sad explanation, in which nature was from henceforth to be combated and crushed in both of their hearts.

After a pause of some minutes, in which they dried their tears, and Louis seemed to expect her to say something in explanation of the strangeness of all this, while she seemed striving to gather courage to begin, she at length said,

“ This weakness, Louis, must no doubt surprise you, as I see it has affected your feelings; and more you have yet to learn, which may surprise you: but it is better, perhaps, that it should come from my mouth than from that of any one else, however distressing the communication may be. I must not shrink from my duty to One higher than us, worms of the dust; nor from the trials which this duty may yet prove to the weak-

ness of flesh and blood. I have been supported over the explanation to my father yesterday, and over the effects that it visibly had upon the good old man, who is so dear to me, according to the flesh. I now trust I shall also be supported in laying before you at once, and before any suspicion can cross your thoughts, a candid account of the state of my mind, and of the line of duty which at present seems clearly marked out for me, and which I trust I shall be further supported in following out, however flesh and blood and the yearning feelings of our fallen nature may struggle against it.

“ Louis, let me give you sincere welcome, but let me at once tell you, that, since you left this place last, my attention has been seriously turned to religion, to the Scriptures of truth, and to the solemn investigation of the relative state and eternal prospects of us sinful mortals in the eye of the God that made us.

“ I am not going to annoy you with details, which must ever be disgusting to the natural

mind. It may be sufficient for me to tell you, that a deep and scriptural view of our state before God, when he himself opens the mind, makes a great change in the character and sentiments; shows the world under a very different aspect; and, when pure, merges all the interest which the things of this life possess in reference to a preparation for, and how men are likely to pass, an eternal existence beyond the grave.

“ This state is mine. I feel that there is such a thing as conversion; as a transition from darkness to light; and that those whom God has so transformed must be kept pure to himself; that at least they must not voluntarily yoke themselves with unbelievers, where there can be neither comfort nor fellowship consistent with the holy vocation to which Christians are called, and upon which unrighteous and unsuitable union God could never be expected to shed his sanctifying blessing.

“ Louis, if you are still as I have always

known you with regard to the awful concerns of religion, in darkness and delusion, even as others, and as I have myself been until a few months past, do not ask me to become your wife while you remain in your sinful state; do not urge upon my weakness to enter with you into so near a relationship, until it may be seen whether Heaven may be pleased to reveal to you the truth as he shows it to his own people. Would to God this may be the case! Would to God you may be speedily brought into that blessed state of light and confidence! for till then, Louis, if the sacrifice should break my heart, I dare not be yours."

During this speech, which was frequently interrupted by tears, Louis sat looking upon her in astonishment, which, as she proceeded, merged into deep compassion; and when she had ended, he made no reply for a little, but shaking his head once or twice, he merely got out the words, "Poor Lydia! my poor, dear, serious Lydia!"

has it come to this?" and he rose and walked distractedly about the room.

She sat gazing up at him, while he stood still and looked in her face. At length he resumed : " Lydia, you have talked of delusion ; did it never occur to you to suspect the possibility that you yourself are the subject of delusion ; favoured by your own serious and abstracted turn of mind, and your virtuous enthusiasm for an amount of purity and piety inconsistent with the very nature with which we have been created, and incompatible with the ordinary and indispensable duties of life ? Come, come, Lydia, I may not argue with you ; but, trust me, nature is not so bad a guide as you imagine, and you will yet come round to see that you do her injustice, to the destroying of your own peace. Do not give way to this strange state of mind, Lydia."

" Now, Louis, this very speech of yours shows me how dangerous your constant society, and the authority of a husband, would be to those

principles for which I am indebted to the very word of God himself, and which I dare not allow to be shaken by your too seductive reasoning. Oh, Louis ! do not argue against me ; but go and search God's word, if peradventure he might bring you to be of the same mind yourself ; for, without that, I trust, not worlds would induce me to disobey the plain injunctions of Scripture in so serious an engagement as marriage."

" My dear Lydia, would you have me to become hypocrite, and *pretend* to see things as you do, as is done every day ? You are yourself the dupe, I fear, of some one who may be more a hypocrite than you suspect. At any rate, trust me, you are yourself under a degree of delusion. The language you hold is not at all new to me. I am come from a country, namely, Scotland, where I have heard much of language resembling yours, and which indicates a state of mind of which any one may easily trace the natural causes,

and predict the effects on a certain species of mental constitution. Let me conjure you, Lydia, if not for my sake, at least for your own, to suffer me to reason with you; and give it good heed, before you throw away your own happiness and usefulness, and entail disappointment and distraction upon a whole family, by an enthusiastic entertainment of notions which set reasoning and the sense of mankind equally at defiance."

"Louis, I dare not listen to you. Do not argue with me to seduce me from my faith; but, oh! let me exhort you to go yourself and search the Scriptures;—go where you may hear the truth proclaimed in purity;—and repent and believe the gospel, that you may be saved; for, ah! there is a fearful looking for of judgment reserved for——"

"Good Heaven! Lydia, is your brain turned? What am I to think now, and how am I to act? I am but this instant returned—and to find you

thus!—Poor Lydia!” and he again stood gazing at her.

“ Do not look so ;—do not look so piteously in my face, Louis. Oh, my heart will break !”

“ And this is to be the end of all our hopes and our wishes, and all our early and dear acquaintanceship ; and our interesting pupilage and enthusiastic mutual admiration of the subjects of our instruction; and of our meetings at the Deer’s Pass ; and our wanderings by the lake ; and our anticipations of passing life together ; and our discourse of friendship, and of love too!—But it could not be love, Lydia, that can be extinguished by the ravings of religious enthusiasm, or set aside by the arts and narrow reasonings of some sectarian fanatic.”

“ Louis,” she said, passionately, rising up, and her hands clasped into each other, “ say anything to me but that! Accuse me of any sin, for I know I am a sinful creature, but do not speak of love! Do not say that I have not, do

not—Ah, Louis! the time is come when with me the affectations of the world have no place, when even maiden reserve and the bashful silence of my sex must give way to truth, eternal, holy truth!—Yes, here let me confess, let me assure you, even kneeling at your feet, that if ever maiden loved, I have loved—that if ever the deep admirations of partiality towards the man of her affections were excited in the breast of any woman, I have felt them all towards you—that if ever the image of mortal man twined itself round the affections and incorporated itself into the heart of one of our frail sex, all this I have felt, and do feel towards you, my earliest choice! But I cannot, I dare not, unless I see a change in you.—Oh, Louis, do not blame me, do not speak to me! I cannot bear more just now.” She continued, rising from her knees, and retreating towards the door, “Let me leave you; I have not strength to tarry and see you shedding tears over me! Oh, Louis,

this is more than I can bear!" she exclaimed, with a sort of shriek; and catching his hands between hers, and kissing them passionately, she rushed out of the room.

The feelings of Louis after this scene are not to be described. He sat in the same room gazing vacantly through the window on the lawn without, his mind sunken into a sort of torpid depression, which almost suspended thought or volition. But at length the gradually returning perception of this new disappointment in the quarter dearest to his feelings became lost in thoughts of melting compassion for Lydia, and even admiration of the lofty though mistaken notions of religious duty by which she so heroically combated her evident love for himself.

But this was altogether a strange day at Orton Hall. The bell was rung at the hour usual to dress for dinner, and the servant went afterwards to the drawing-room to announce it; but not a creature was present but Mr. Orton himself, who

waited in vain for his family. None appeared, and he went soon into the eating apartment alone; but no one was there; and the servants looked at him, and at the covered dishes and empty chairs, with astonishment. Miss Orton, overcome by her feelings, had been put to bed almost in a fever. Louis Stavely had rushed out, notwithstanding his fatigue, and was wandering abstractedly in the wood: and even Mrs. Orton, having had an unpleasant dispute with the old gentleman in the morning, respecting a dogma of Mr. Allmouth's, which he could not see as she did, and some bickering having ensued (a thing now not uncommon), had her meal brought to her own apartment, and, pleading headache, would not meet her husband at dinner.

"What is this?" exclaimed Mr. Orton to himself, as he walked up and down the dining-room, refusing to sit to dinner alone. "What has taken place in my house of late, that I am thus used? My very table is deserted; my fa-

mily are scattered, or afraid to meet each other ; and I am left alone. Can it be religion that has turned my house upside down, and made it the scene of dispute, distraction, and despondency ? that has turned my wife, and myself, and our hitherto happy children, into controversial opponents, and almost personal enemies of each other ? I pray God that I may be kept in my right mind in the midst of it all ! ”

CHAPTER XXIII.

FAMILY DISSENSIONS AND DERANGEMENTS.

THE reader may have judged that the unexpected change in the mind of sir Hugh Salvage arose less from pure conviction (as motives assumed by weak minds, to be simply those of conscience, are frequently very compound in their character), than that Mr. Hanby and he had quarrelled; and then the knight saw many things he could never see before, and blamed the crafty religious director for things done between them, and for which sir Hugh might have been prepared by the slightest penetration, when he allowed such a man to worm himself into his confidence.

Mr. Hanby had been to London during the interval when Stavely was in Scotland. Some

reported that he had been affronted and disappointed of some honour at a religious meeting ; others said he had been attacked and held up to ridicule in the public papers or periodicals. Be this as it may, he returned in miserable ill humour to Mount Carmel, spoke with more bitterness than ever of every one who opposed him, and set about recruiting the sect he had partly formed with more energy than ever. It was by overacting himself to sir Hugh, and endeavouring to inveigle the old knight into his farther schemes against Mr. Stavely, and also for the ruin of Mr. Groom, the bookseller, that he caused the quarrel ; for the knight, though a weak man, had a remnant of good sense ; and becoming disgusted with the startling doctrines of Mr. All-mouth, whom he sometimes attended, and hearing from every quarter of the hubbub about religion in the village, and the advance of sectarian disputes, he felt some alarm for the church of England herself, of which he had been a member

all his life, and opposed Mr. Hanby stoutly in his sectarian plans. This disposition of sir Hugh, both against Mr. Hanby and in favour of Mr. Stavely and the views of the family at Orton Hall, was much assisted, as we have hinted, by what was disclosed to him by young Groom, son of the bookseller, to whom he had lately taken a strong fancy, probably from the reaction of his former attempted injustice. But this latter cause increased tenfold the spite of the director at the aged bookseller and his family ; for to what originated, as he supposed, in that quarter, he attributed the defeat of all his plans, and he consulted anxiously with Strip, his attorney, to see if any means could be devised to get the old man banished out of the neighbourhood.

Knowing the value of a good name, in so limited a community, he saw this was the quarter from which Mr. Groom must be assailed ; and that his character might be undermined with comparative ease, at a time when party-spirit ran

high; and in a place where every thing began to be viewed through the distorted mediums and disputed fancies of religion. But it was necessary to get something insinuated against him, which would be favoured by no sect, and which had no friends, and which all parties would alike execrate and oppose. This he soon decided upon, viz. a charge of *no religion at all*, no belief whatsoever—not even a wrong belief—but something composed of rank unbelief; perhaps even blasphemy, and called by the names of deism, or atheism, or such other words, which good men even shudder to pronounce.

These dread insinuations were soon made in the village through the means of Mr. Strip, and the librarian of the new institution, and were received by the people now with avidity; as, besides their recommendation as an evil report, they appeared at once the key to the whole character of the harmless bookseller. His general attendance upon, and mild defence of, the church of England,

at least of the moderate and judicious portion of its teachers, as well represented by the reverend Mr. Oxford, went for nothing, or was set down to mere form ; his parrying and eluding party controversy, was a supercilious contempt for all religion ; and his very silence was deep, and dark, and doubtful, and evidently covered inward scepticism, and deism, and black infidelity. As a name helps greatly in those cases, Mr. Hanby, in the condescension of his sanctified wit, changed his appellation, in the presence of some one who was delighted with the anecdote, from David Groom, to *David Hume* ; some one having looked over the shoulder of the old bookseller and actually caught him reading the writings of that horrible philosopher. And thus, between the open report of having spoken blasphemy, and the obscurely hinted suspicion of deism or atheism, together with the dreadful cognomen of *David Hume*, the man was shunned and his shop deserted, his trade left him and went to the

other bookseller, the lately introduced protégée of Mr. Hanby; and, while his new rival was flattered and enriched, ruin and beggary stared him in the face.

The religious custom of Oldwood, in the book trade, having increased tenfold in the course of the late agitations, and Mr. Storey, the new bookseller, being quite adapted to this important station, having an ear for every body's opinions, and a word of agreement and smile of acquiescence in every new discovery in religion that was made by his customers; and moreover having a face that shone with religion, and a head that shook with solemnity just in the proper time, besides a voice that sounded like an oracle; what wonder was it, that he should soon arrive at riches and reputation in this neighbourhood, and that he should be enabled to shake his head in moralizing compassion over the ruin of such as *David Hume*, or any other pitiable man, who so evidently lacked all religion? Besides the great

Mr. Hanby, even Mr. Provan, another rising sun in the village, took this new religious *trader* under his special favour; our old friend, Mr. Creevy, laid out many good pounds in his shop, in return for being allowed to discharge the overflow of his pious *ratiocination* upon him; and even Mrs. Tupin made him her confidant in matters of love and religion; so that Mr. Storey flourished like a green bay-tree, and began to set up tea-drinkings and prayer-meetings of his own, and even rivalled that lady, to the great edification and envy of the whole village.

It may perhaps be matter of astonishment to the observing reader, that our friend Mr. Creevy should not, all this time, be announced as having joined his polemical superior, Mr. Provan; and that, although seemingly converted to the majority of the new opinions of the latter *light*, Creevy had still avoided an actual junction, and still left the religious field open; in short, to see what *Providence* might determine as to his future

usefulness. Whether his ambition had taken a higher flight, and he began to entertain distant hopes of setting up a sect of his own, does not clearly appear; but, in truth, Mr. Creevy was now getting past his novelties in religion, and becoming a little accustomed to his own and others' decent and indispensable hypocrisies. He was entering into that stage wherein, with minds such as his, worldly wisdom and "godliness with contentment," &c. dovetail remarkably into each other; for indeed, he reasoned, we are frail mortals, and it was clear, that if a man did not provide for himself and his own house he was *worse* than an *infidel*; and as there must be an uncertainty, after all, about those things, about which people held so many different opinions, it was natural that a man should look to *himself*, and provide well for his own house.

There was also swimming in Creevy's head certain vague notions about Mr. Hanby, the great religious squire of Mount Carmel (a man

who seemed to know perfectly what was what), and *his* new sect, and perhaps the building of a new chapel (for Mr. Hanby had plenty of money), and other matters, which kept his conscience in a doubting state, about just at present joining the baptists and Mr. Provan.

In the meantime, while the church of England itself, and Mr. Oxford, and David Groom, and all, seemed going to the dogs, Mr. Provan and Mr. Hanby seemed to divide between them the religion of Oldwood, and even to cut out the arguing Mr. Allmouth himself; for Mr. Hanby had engaged an orator of talents out of London, who at present held forth in a wing of the mansion of Mount Carmel. And now the methodists, and ranters, and jumpers, and Jerusalemites, and other inferior sectarians, were completely thrown into the shade, and greatly distanced by the two leading parties; and obliged to scramble as they could for the offals of the general revival in religion. Mr. Creevy himself began to be

driven stupid with the clamours of the different claimants who courted his countenance and support. The arguments of the different parties who met at the religious levees of Mrs. Tupin, or the shop of Mr. Storey, the librarian, perplexed and worried him; for his powers of argument were rather limited, and his travelled experience in religion and well-saved oratory were absolutely drowned in the jangle of system-making controversy. The poor man almost wished himself back with Mr. Oxford for peace's sake, and to get rid of importunity. He was at one time just about joining Mr. Provan, being almost overcome by the coaxing importunity of Mrs. Tupin; but he resisted the temptation, until an extensive *order* from Mr. Hanby for bricks for his new chapel, now immediately to be built, fixed his wavering mind, and determined him, as the sagacious director had foreseen, to decide at length, and to cast in his lot with the newly raised independents of Mount Carmel.

We think it necessary to give these particulars of "church history," to show what was going on in the village. Lydia Orton sat aloof like a superior spirit, pondering deeply upon religious truth and human duty, according to her own intense and lofty conceptions, and ignorant as yet of the wretched use made of the boasted liberty of Bible discussion by the lower mass of mankind, and the disgusting, and interested, and ever-changing squabbles of "the religious world."

Sir Hugh Salvage, at the time of Louis Stavely's return, still lay lingering, and occasionally insensible, upon that bed where worn-out nature drags out her last remaining energies, and flickering life rises and falls in its exhausted socket; or, like a feeble and palsied spinster, twines, with feverish dread of letting it go, the last attenuated thread of our mortal existence. When he heard of the return of Stavely, a smile of pleasure lighted up his sunken features, and

he instantly caused his attendants to send for the youth to Orton Hall, and to bring him to his bedside.

" My dear young friend," said the old man, when Stavely was seated by him, " the time is come when I must render up my mortal life, and depart from a world into which you may be said to be just entering, with youth and health to enjoy your fortune, and to be blessed with one of the loveliest and best of women. I am not worthy, Mr. Stavely—I am not worthy to live, to be spared, to see you once more, and to ask your forgiveness in person for the injury I did you, both in deed and thought, when you were formerly at the Castle. Doubtless my old friend, Mr. Orton, has told you what I explained to him ; and now, Mr. Stavely, let me hear you say that you forgive me, for truly I repent deeply. But I am highly favoured in seeing you once more ; and indeed I am much better this morning, and my hearing methinks has returned

to me. The Lord is good to me at my latter end."

"Sir, do not talk of forgiveness," said Stavely; "I know of none to whom I owe forgiveness now. But, sir, if you wish me to say the words, may God forgive us all our trespasses as freely as I have forgiven you!"

"God bless you, young man, and grant you a long and prosperous life, and make you happy with the wife of your youth! and may your children rise up around you to bless you and their virtuous mother, until, when you come to be laid like me upon your dying bed, they may—"

A series of thoughts had crossed Stavely's brain as he sat occupied with the affecting meditations of the scene; but while the old man was speaking, all the pent-up thoughts which recent events had caused to work together in his mind melted into sorrow, and, covering his face with his hand, he interrupted the dying man by an

irrepressible burst of agony, and he turned away his head, while he felt a few large drops gush from his eyes.

"Do not weep, my son," said the knight, somewhat startled; "I did not think that any body could have wept for a childless old man like myself; but the boldest natures are sometimes the softest in certain cases. Louis, my son, dry your tears, for I have something more to say to you."

"Sir, I am attentive; pray proceed."

"I wish to see your wife that is to be, the much praised daughter of my friend Orton. It is long since I have seen her; and as God has spared me so long, bring her with you to my bedside, that I may see her sweet countenance once more. Could I not even have the satisfaction of seeing you married, either before me, or previous to your meeting me? If I could see your hands joined as man and wife before I die, I should be happy."

"Sir, perhaps it were better not to—
perhaps—"

"What do you say? You are not going to refuse my dying request? Go away, Mr. Stavely, and bring her, that I may give you my blessing while life and sensibility are granted to me."

This request, when Louis had departed, embarrassed him exceedingly, and he consulted Mr. Orton regarding it immediately on his return to the Hall. But the old gentleman, instead of looking upon it in the same light with Stavely, caught at it, in the anxiety of his mind for his daughter, as furnishing a ray of hope, that the solemnity of a deathbed request, and the presence and influence of so many who were interested for her (for he determined also to be present), might influence her to waive her extraordinary religious objections, and consent to the marriage, upon which the hearts of all parties seemed to be set, and the refusal of which unhinged every plan of future happiness, and

entailed misery and distraction on all concerned.

There was no difficulty in persuading Lydia to accede to the request of sir Hugh, for the solemn impression of a death-bed was even a gratification to her in her present serious, if not melancholy, state of mind; and having no idea of the knight's wishes with regard to Mr. Stavely, she even pleased herself with the thought that it was not without a reference to her religious character, now much talked of, that he had expressed a desire to see her before he died.

There was something in the reality of this meeting even more striking than she had imagined or expected. She proceeded, accompanied by her father, through the lofty apartments of the sick house, and entered the inner chamber with a sort of dread, feeling as if some awful responsibility rested upon herself in this last interview with a human soul, before its departure into its everlasting and mysterious state.

The room was nearly dark, and she observed several persons standing or sitting in perfect silence round the bed of the dying, as if watching, in solemn meditation, the wandering somnolency and reluctant struggling which so often detains the departing on the brink of eternity. The physician was one of the group, who sat nearest the bed with his watch in one hand and the skinny hand of the patient in the other, observing philosophically how the last pulses of life beat away into final rest, and measuring the moments when sensation might cease. Behind him stood Mr. Stavely, accompanied by the venerable Mr. Oxford, who, not noticing the surrounding attendants, seemed calmly to watch that process of giving up the ghost, through which he himself was likely so soon to pass.

The knight seemed much nearer his end than the energy of the preceding day had promised, and Lydia, with her father, moved towards where he lay with cautious tread, and stood

looking over him. The altered look and shrunken muscles of the dying filled her with a sort of sick horror at decaying mortality. He opened his eyes, however, and gazed with more strength and steadiness than had been expected, while Mr. Stavely, in obedience to a sign from the physician, drew the window-curtain a little aside and allowed the light more clearly to shine upon Lydia's person. He made an effort to speak; a moistened feather having been applied to his lips, he said pretty audibly :

“ Yes, yes, I know you. Alas ! I thought I had been dead ; but I know you all ; and my old friend too, the father of Louis's wife. Are ye married yet, children ? Indeed I have forgot.”

“ We are not married yet, sir,” said Louis, strangely.

“ And why do ye delay ? I wished to see you married before I die, and then ye might come into your own castle to live beside me. Truly, I should not interrupt your happiness ; for a

small space will serve me; and I need not now leave this mansion until I am carried out, and ye shall bury me with your own hands."

The company looked at each other, in apparent surprise at the confusion of the sick man's thoughts.

"Why do ye stand at such a distance from each other? Are not marriages made in heaven, and blessed there too? Let me see you join hands before this goodly company, my dear children; and my poor blessing, the blessing of a dying man, will do you no harm."

A movement was made by Stavely; Lydia only grasped the post of the bed, as if ready to drop.

"Good God! Mr. Orton," said the patient, his voice elevated almost to a scream, "what is the meaning of this?"

"I believe, sir," answered the squire, "that my daughter has imbibed of late some notions of

a religious nature in regard to marriage with a member of the church of England, who cannot accord with her in some of those notions. This leads her to doubt whether she would be doing right in giving her hand to Mr. Stavely at present; but believing, myself, that she takes an overstrained view of her duty, I trust her scruples will give way to the judgment and influence of yourself and others whom I have the happiness to see present."

"I have heard something of this, but would not believe it. It cannot be possible, my child, that you refuse to marry Louis from any religious objection? Believe me, he is not as some took pains to represent him, after the meeting about the library. You hesitate! I am not able to speak!"

The physician here interfered, and would not suffer his patient to be disturbed for a short space.

After a few minutes, the sick man made a sign to Lydia, with his finger, that she would take Mr. Stavely by the hand.

"Sir," said Lydia, encouraging herself to speak, "here are a number of persons present, before whom I cannot fittingly express either my regret, according to the feelings of nature, that I cannot comply with your wishes, nor my humble thoughts of myself, that you should think it worthy of you to devote these few precious moments, in the view of an approaching eternity, in planning *my* earthly happiness or advantage. I pray that I may be supported in obedience to the Scriptures of truth, which to my view clearly forbid me, however much my own weak feelings may plead for it, to unite myself with the dearest according to the flesh, who is yet in that unregenerate state in which we all are by nature."

"So then, young lady, you do not think Mr. Stavely good enough for you, since you began to hear that crazy man in the village?" said the

knight, impatiently : "Why am I spared on earth to see this?" "Oh ! sir," said Lydia, fervently ; "you are on the confines of an eternal world ; let me entreat of you to think of your own future safety. Oh ! that I could be the means of showing you the only way of escape from the——"

"Is there no one there to put a pillow under my back ? Do raise me up ! Nay, doctor," added the knight with amazing animation, addressing the physician, "I will try to speak to this extraordinary girl. Miss Orton, believe me, there is something wrong in your present excited state of mind. I cannot argue with you ; but let me entreat of you not to give way to this infatuation ; you 'll see the error of it some day. Consent now, before me, to this marriage, upon which not only Mr. Stavely, but your father and all of us seem to have built our happiness. Do not, my dear lady, derange the plans and defeat the wishes of a whole neighbourhood, and break

down the future happiness even of yourself, for any newfangled fancy put into your head by the sectarian adventurers who have come to trouble our happy village. I am unable to—I would beg—ay, beg of you, if I could speak!"

" Ah! my dear and venerated sir, do not beg of me. Do not entreat a poor worm of the earth to act against the clear dictates of conscience. I cannot! dare not! The time may come. Heaven may work a change in his heart.—Oh that it may indeed come! that he may be brought to see the truth!—Heaven give me strength! Gentlemen, I cannot bear your pleading looks: let me retire."

" My dear Miss Orton," said the clergyman, who stood gazing upon her with looks of the deepest affection and compassion, " let me add my entreaties to those of all our friends present, that you would take a more general consideration of your duties, and even of the Scriptures on which you found your views. Think for a mo-

ment what would be the effect on society if such notions as yours were unfortunately to extend to many ; and suffer yourself to judge of the Bible with reference to the world generally, for which it was sent, and to which it is meant to be applicable, as well as to the narrow conceptions of small sects, who, I am sorry to say, often entail much misery through society. Be assured of it, Miss Orton, you will, if you continue your inquiries hereafter, find yourself to be now in the wrong."

" Sir, if you could take out of the Scriptures the positive command addressed to Christians, 'Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers,' &c., and all the passages and arguments from the nature of the case, which so clearly point out the impossibility of any fellowship being possible between righteousness and unrighteousness, light and darkness, Christ and Belial ; then most gladly would I do what every worldly, and filial, and heart-gratifying consi-

deration would prompt. As for the effect of such views as mine on general society, alas! general society have nothing to do with them, nor ever will have. *The world* will never generally serve the Lord Christ; and strait will always be the gate through which the righteous enter into life, and few indeed will go in thereat."

"Indeed, Miss Orton," replied the clergyman, "were this a place and time for religious argument, I could, I think, soon show any one, not carried away by enthusiasm, the strange and even absurd effects that would follow, were we to take the words of the Scriptures literally and detached, as you are doing. I assure you, madam, I feel for your state of mind, for I have known it in some degree myself; and I reverence your lofty views of duty, and admire your self-denying sincerity, and even your enthusiasm. Nevertheless, I am convinced that you are in

some measure the dupe of those who have now little of either the one or the other. But take the word of an old man, who ought to know something both of Scripture and human nature, that you are wrong, decidedly wrong; and persist not in throwing a happy family into disorder and misery, in an obstinate adherence to such overstrained and partial views of your duty."

" Lydia," said her father, " far be it from me to offer any violence to your conscience ; but let me entreat of you to consider your present views as at least doubtful, and to offer no further opposition, on this most unusual ground, to the wishes of all your friends, and even to your own feelings. Lydia, I condescend to *beg* of you. Surely you may at least doubt that you would be doing right in acting in opposition to all our judgments ?"

" ' He that doubteth is damned if he eat,' " quoted Lydia, half to herself, as if for mental

encouragement ; and she stood looking round upon the company with the elevated spirit of a martyr.

" What is it she says to all this ? " murmured the sick man.

" My dear father," she at length said, " I do not doubt at all. I cannot doubt. Can I not lay my finger upon the passage ; ay, numerous passages ? Can I not point out the whole chain of reasoning contained in God's word, which I, as a humble disciple of Christ, dare not disobey ; which forbids in the most direct terms so sacred a union between those who have taken up his cross and the cause, and those who must necessarily oppose his apostolic commandments, however amiable as men, being as yet in the bondage of nature's guilt ? And can I not show you where the Scriptures even condescend to warn Christians of the danger to their profession and their own peace, and the constant discomfort and temptation to which they would

subject themselves by such a union? Would to Heaven that Mr. Stavely's mind was humbled down into—But I dare not act upon hopes and wishes. I know too well his present proud spirit and worldly ambition, as is natural, and that we ——And yet, alas! I feel how hard it is for frail nature to deny itself, and take up its cross daily. Gentlemen, do not further tempt a poor weak maiden, as the serpent tempted Eve, to eat of that golden fruit which hangs so seductively on the good and evil tree of this sinful world.”^{sobred}

“ My good friends,” said Stavely, now coming forward, “ I pray you to end this, to me, very painful discussion. You cannot, I am sure, withhold your admiration of the motives which actuate Miss Orton, whatever may be your opinions regarding the soundness of the views from which they proceed. To me, I confess, she has just put the matter in a new light, in regard to the apprehended discomfort and danger perhaps to both parties, in case of a union, where there

was such a state of mind in regard to religion on one side, without its being approved of on the other. I need not say, that the bare idea of the possibility of disunion, disapproval, distrust, perhaps unavoidable disagreement or dissension on any subject whatsoever,—(and what subject more fruitful of these than religion?)—with Lydia shocks me: and she is quite right, that while she continues in this state of mind, it would be wrong to urge what was originally intended.”
“How my dying day is imbibited!” murmured the sick man, in a voice scarcely audible: “and I so much the cause of it; abetting the schemes of that scoundrel, Hanby, and assisting in setting the village in a religious flame! A few months ago I caused these young people to part, as I have heard with much sorrow, and disappointed them of a marriage which would have been to them then the highest bliss, and been the rejoicing of all to whom they are known: now

they refuse each other, and cannot live together. And I am to have the misery of being preserved alive on a sick bed to witness the fruit of my own doings! God grant me consolation; for little good have I been able to do in my life!"

"Ah, sir!" said Lydia, solemnly, "let me exhort you to seek consolation from the only source where it is effectual, and do not let your thoughts dwell on your doing of good in reference to God's favour. Do you believe, sir, in this solemn hour, that all the good you may have done with such a view is worse than nothing, and will only add—"

"I don't believe any such absurdity, madam!" exclaimed the dying man, firmly and aloud; "and I desire that you will not trouble me with your sectarian theology, while I have the comfort of the attendance of a regular clergyman of—"

"I must beg to interfere," said the physician, rising. "Be so good as to be still, sir Hugh. The interesting circumstances of this case have

induced me to swerve to a much greater extent than is proper in permitting such a discussion in the presence of my patient. But it will be necessary now to leave him to repose ; at least, the conversation, if prolonged, must be of a different nature. There must be none of those harassing discussions, or terrifying appeals of a religious nature, which are sometimes productive of such distressing consequences on the weak minds of persons suffering under bodily affliction, and which, during my long experience, I have seen proper uniformly to forbid."

While the physician was speaking, the patient seemed to have fallen into a sort of stupor ; a rattling sound was heard issuing from his throat ; and an alarming change seemed passing over his features, while the company drew round his bed in silence. At length he opened his eyes, and gazed for a moment in the face of Lydia. He worked his tongue round his mouth for a few seconds more, and with a sort of hectic energy

said aloud, “ Say you will consent ! Say you are his ! I have set my heart on it ! Will you not repair the evil I have done you before I die ?

—You won’t speak, girl !—No, no !—Oh ! my God, forgive us !—and—and—”

He was not able to say more ; but holding up his hand with an effort, once or twice, he gave an exhausted gasp, and expired.

It need scarcely be added, that the company present departed, and separated with no ordinary sensations.

END OF VOL. II.

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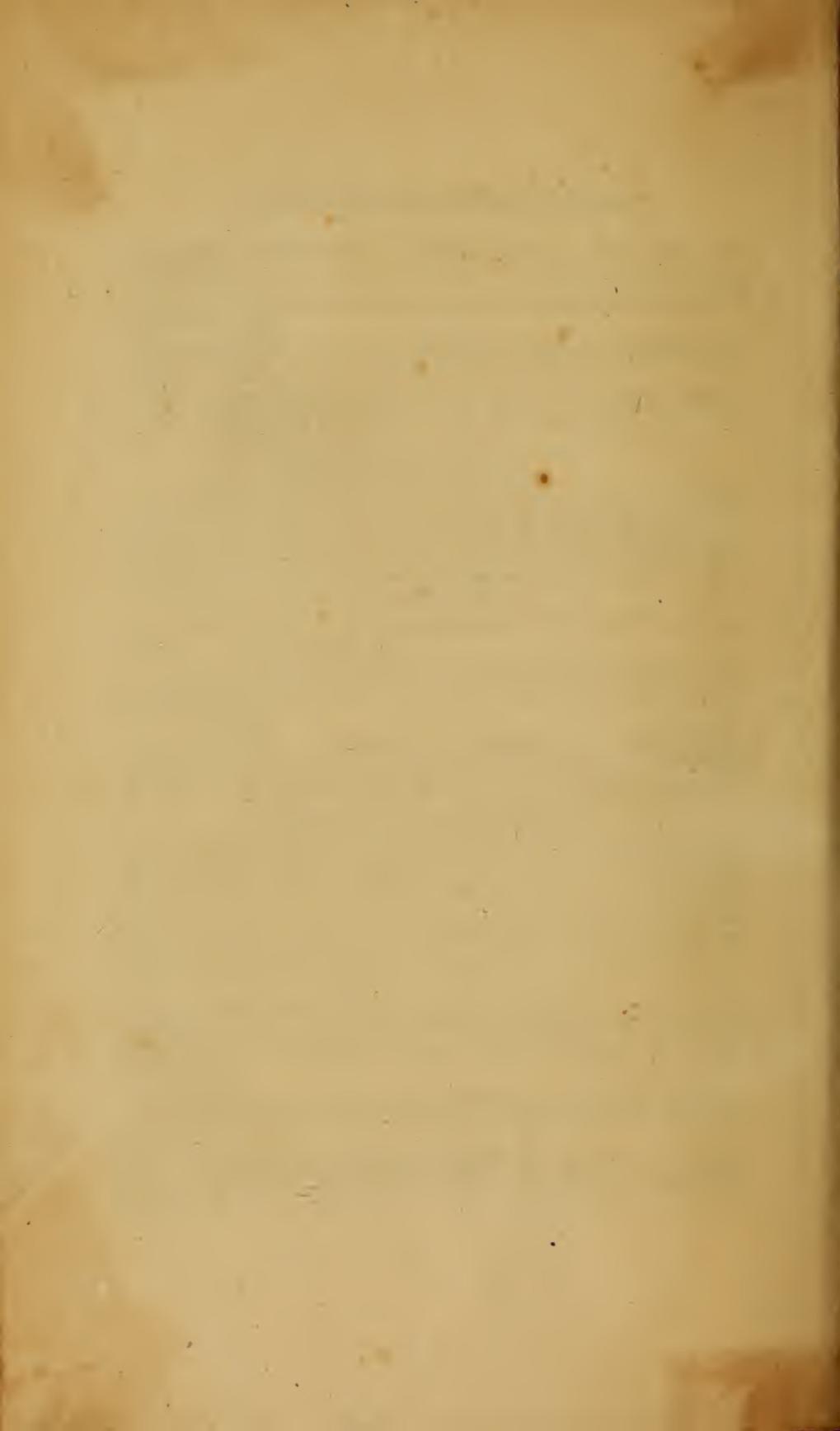
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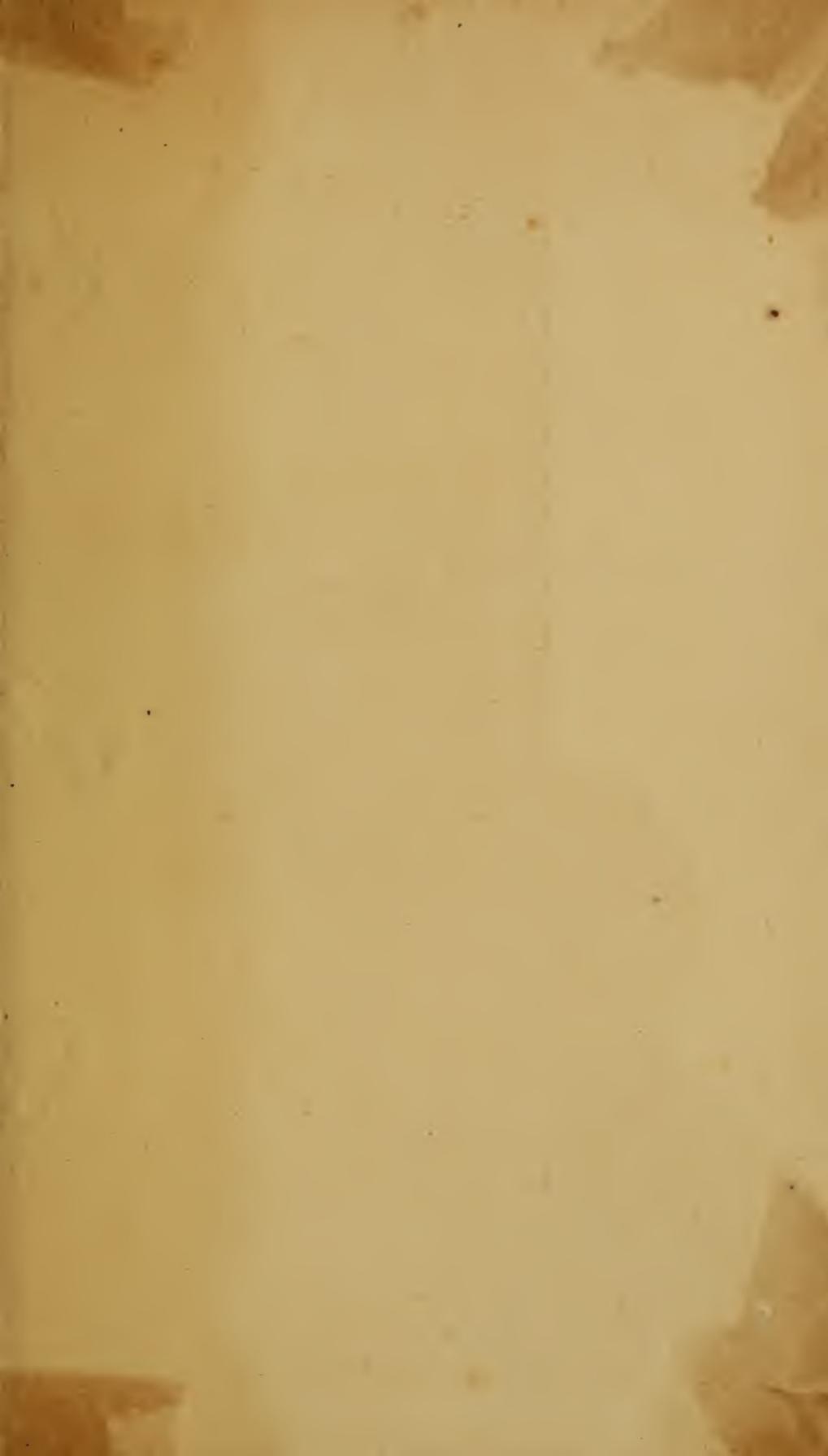
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